LOVAT

DICKSON'S

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GERAINT GOODWIN

The Flying Hours Are Gone

I REMEMBER everything; one cannot help memory. We come back after fifteen years and a great gulf divides us; we have changed, and we look at the world, this world, as at a different place. We think that everything has changed with us and then we see a tree just as it had always been, and the old weir with a timber loose and the timber is still loose; an old gnarled branch, black and sodden, had been caught in the mill-race and it is still there!

This plantation—a planting we called it—seems just the same. It covers all the side of the mountain. It was fearful to walk into it; there was no sound to our footsteps and it was always dark. We liked to think—what did we think in those echoless depths?—that somewhere always just beyond the reach of vision there were other shapes, moving like shadows, vague and phantasmal; like a dream that remains on the edge of memory, remote and unseizable. And there, too, we felt a strange, compelling presence, the presence of the wood, something primitive and elemental. How absurd it all seems now. The wood, of course, was like any other wood, and with that lattice of branches shutting

off the sun, with here and there a spike of light descending like a white lustrous rod, the carpet of pine-needles; why, no doubt it would seem strange.

I thought of all this as I sat there and I laughed at these young imaginings. All gone . . . ! That is the heresy of Time that one can say with Elijah, Behold, there is nothing!

I sat beside the favourite pool and remembered the great fish in its black depths. Perhaps they were still there. I remembered that intangible thrill as one slithered over the mossy stones to cast a fly under the alders, the whole being braced with a quickened consciousness of life. One heard the twenty tiny metallic tinkles of twenty streams breaking over the boulders and there would be just a flash, a sprung crescent of silver and . . . I subscribed to a fishing paper for a long time afterwards, but, as one of the Elizabethans had said, the flying hours are gone. There is no recapturing those early days. By and by I got bored with everything to do with fishing and really I can't tell you where I have put my rod.

People then predicted great things for me: I cannot for the life of me imagine that they had any cause. But my sincerity was a very real thing and it had the power of infecting others. They believed in me because I believed in myself. I was a law student at the National College of Wales at Aberystwyth, but this was but the outward guise that hid the inner aspect. At that time (how very *vieux jeu* it seems now), I believed in a new Wales; I was always speaking about our heritage and I would hint, in a sort of prophetic way, at our future. I must have got all my ideas from Renan, the all-enduring Celt, driven to the promontories of the world and nursing his proud spirit in solitude. I don't think it did me any harm; it is good for one to believe in something when one is young. How arid my degree course would have been without these—well, yes, dreams.

Still all this is neither here nor there. To continue with the story, I had put too big a strain on what St. Francis called Brother Ass; the body did not rebel, for there was no rebellion left; it collapsed. I came here, to that farm on the edge of the planting, and I spent a winter there. Every morning I had half a pint of stout, a glass of warm milk straight from the cow and a raw egg, and then I had the same again in the evening. But I did not grow any fatter. I remember I used to weigh myself on the scales in the little station and chalk up my weight on the " traffic regulations " on the wall. Good lord ! perhaps they are there still ! The horror of watching the little sliding racket. . . . I always used to argue that the scales were wrong. I won't go into details, but you know how one always looks into one's handkerchief after one has coughed, and then one looks into the glass and sees one's jawbones sticking out and tries to arrange one's face differently; but they always stick out. And the despair that welled up in my heart !

I could not have gone through with it but for her. Of course there were times when she could not reach me, those times when the panic fear of death used to encompass me and one would go walking off into the mountains. One would stand still before a larch, all shriven in the winter, and say : " There will be leaves next Spring; a few months at most and the buds will burst out like little violent flames. I wonder if I shall ever see them." And a collie all blown about by the wind would rush out of a byre, barking, and you would smell the cows, and then the twilight would come and there seemed to be a strange and almost fearful light on the mountain where the last of the day remained. At such times the whole landscape would seem to be transformed into something strange and other-worldly.

All this I remember now, but, as I have said, only as one

remembers a dream. It may have happened, it *did* happen, but it remains just beyond the reaches of the mind; one rakes over the memory, but one is only vouchsafed a glimpse like a familiar face one sees in the darkness.

Ah, yes, but I remember all about the place, the old oak dresser in the kitchen (it was worth hundreds of pounds, I used to tell the old man), and the brass harness above the fireplace, and the blue tea-canister with a picture of the King on it and a picture of General Buller after some battle or another, and, of course, on the sewing-machine in the corner, The Book, from whence issued, like a wraith, the grim colourless God of our fathers.

But these are only the external things. I can't for the life of me remember that something which is all there is to remember, I can't even recall what she looked like though I should surely know her again. She was tall and dark with violet eyes—yes, they were violet or a peculiar shade of blue, and they really were the most expressive eyes I have ever seen. It made one sad to look into them—not really sad if you understand, but one began to think about life in a vague kind of way. But, as I say, I can never quite remember . . .

On the top of the hill was an old ring of piled-up stones. Half sunk in the ground and pock-marked with lichen they reared their arrogant old heads as though defying Time. Some said that this was really a " castle," but they were more likely the remains of a Druidic circle; and indeed to come up out of that wood by moonlight, to walk across the sward, was to become aware of something, some knowledge that one could never utter, that . . .

Well, we went up there for the last time. I was going away on the Monday, back to college, back to work. I was going to face up to the future again. How bright everything seemed. That hideous cloud had lifted at last. I felt like

a small boy who has waited and waited for his birthday and then suddenly realises after the months, the weeks, that it is the day after to-morrow!

I remember that she had put on her Sunday dress.

"What have you done that for?" I said.

"Only because I want to," she answered sadly.

She was sitting on one of the stones, knees bent up, her head on her hands, looking out into the darkness. I suddenly realised that this was all she could do, all she could do to show how sorry she was that I was going. I felt very sad. I felt a sense of compassion that I had never known before nor ever was to know again. That poor little black dress that some dressmaker had run together in the market-town when her mother had died five years before.

She had done this for me; she loved me with all her soul, she had tended me through all the winter, she had seen me, like an arrogant young hawk, begin to stretch his wings and venture forth . . . and then life would settle down as before, settle down with its awful inevitability and encompass her. And yet she could say nothing.

"Ceri," I said, "Ceri . . ."

I felt an ominous dread right down to the depths. I felt afraid of myself and of the future and of what the future might do for me. I buried my head on her lap and began to sob. They were the last scalding tears of youth.

"Help me to remember, Ceri, help me to remember . . ." I said, and the words seemed to come from my heart.

She lifted my head between her hands.

But all this was long ago and you can see what might have happened. I had stopped dead on the brink of a chasm; I might have gone plunging down—where, whither? And now, long after, I know that I was right. I could not then have supported myself, I had not even begun a career. The

most important thing in life, whatever the sentimentalists say, is to get a roof over one's head. Well, I have a roof over my head though it is not a very big one, and I have never thought it necessary to marry.

I had taken my degree and had been called at one of the Inns of Court. I had forgotten to talk about a new Wales, for a Welshman in London has enough to live down without all that. I once thought of changing my name—something with a real good Anglo-Saxon flavour to it—but it was not easy. And if I could have changed my profession I would have done so, for the law is one of the most bourgeois of callings and there are more kicks than ha'pence for the son of a road-mender even though his father carried Thucydides (in the original) in the backside of his corduroys. After four years I could point to an acquittal at Nottingham Assizes (under the Poor Persons Act) and a few words of commendation from the judge, and that was about all.

And so I drifted into journalism—after all, it is only crossing the street—and became leader-writer on a good Nonconformist paper, and was able to spread myself out on disarmament, free speech and the right of small nations, and all those things which I had at heart. Some day, I said, when I had enough capital, I would go back to the law . . . but perhaps if I went back to the law I would say that some say I would go back to journalism. . . .

And once a year I go back to Wales for my summer holidays, but it is never quite the same; one can never recall the past, for there is always that gulf, as wide as—how wide? —why, as wide as Time!

I can see from where I stand the old stones on the hill and just the top of the house with its curl of smoke climbing over the trees. I can smell the peat, that smell which *is* the mountains to us who have been bred there. I can see a

man trimming the hedge on the far end of the bye-take; it must be her husband. I can hear the dog barking and the cheep-cheep of the young turkeys and someone stepping across the cobbled yard, and then the slamming of a door, and then a child crying. . . . I will go up and see her, I say. She would be glad to welcome me, I know, and I can even picture myself handing round coppers to the children, and perhaps the best teapot will come down and the canister with the King's picture on it.

I had half-opened the gate in the meadow; I watched the wind blow it shut again. And I was on the outside, standing with the present and the future. And beyond was the past, but a past that had not stood still. Where it had gone to I did not know.

MARIAN BOWER

Preferment

The Reverend Theophilus Pensby was a poor relation at an epoch when to be a poor relation was a career in itself.

Because he was a poor relation, Theophilus had taken Orders.

For the same reason, and also to rid himself of the importunities of the " demned fellow's " mother, Dame Margaret, his Grace the Duke of Pensweyre presented his relative to the perpetual curacy of Torrish-on-the-Marsh, and trusted he had heard the last of the " milksop and his dam."

Less than a twelve-month later, Dame Margaret was gathered to her forbears. The duke was sufficiently mindful of the ties of blood to attend the burial of the lady—not within the family vault, but just without it. Theophilus, as the principal mourner, and the duke headed the procession to the grave, and as they went along, his Grace exclaimed aloud, " Lord ! if the fellow doesn't look for all the world as if he were an old barn owl in breeches ! " For Theophilus had taken to spectacles, to great goggles, with circles of black felt between the frame and the glass.

Next, his Grace wondered—to himself this time—now that the restraining hand of Dame Margaret was removed, how

long it might be before some country wench would think the vicarage at Torrish, with the perpetual curate attached, worth angling for.

This last consideration by no means pleased his Grace. The Owl was not so far from the title. The duke himself had no son. The next heir at that moment was taking advantage of the lull in hostilities, to waste his substance in Paris when he ought to be thinking about taking to himself a wife and begetting himself a son.

Among the mourners was another distant connection. Out at the elbows, embarrassed with a bunch of no less than five daughters. The duke happened to look to where all five stood in a row. His glance stopped at the third—at Judy, and Judy, who was deemed a forward piece, met his Grace's stare with a toss of her head.

The duke was so vastly obliging as to step across and say a word to the Out-at-Elbows. The first daughter was presented to his Grace; the second. "Plain as pike staves, both of them," was the duke's inward verdict.

When he came to Judy, he chucked her under the chin.

"Gad! madam," he said. "If I'd a son, I'd see to it that your father found a husband for you."

"But as your Grace has only a nephew for an heir, what do you propose to do?" answered Judy.

For a moment his Grace of Pensweyre was taken aback by such audacity. Then, forgetful of the occasion, he laughed both "long and hearty."

"By the lord Harry, madam!" he swore. "I'll—I'll——" What would he do? He saw Theophilus. "By the lord Harry!" his Grace repeated, "I'll marry you to that Reverend Owl over there. You'll be out of mischief, my pretty dear, and my milksop cousin will be saved from making a worse fool of himself."

The more the duke thought of the project, the better he liked it. The Reverend Theophilus was made aware of this further manifestation of ducal goodwill and humbly offered his duty and made no objection.

The question was, what would Judy say?

She recollected that she was approaching three-and-twenty in a day when an unmarried woman became an old maid at the latest at twenty-five.

Judy had no tender sentiments for the Reverend Theophilus Pensby. How could she have? But beaux were few, and the two sisters older than herself had never had as much as a young man between them. Besides, the vicarage of Torrish might be considered quite a genteel establishment. Did it not boast of a withdrawing room as well as a parlour, quite an elegant front drive, and one of those new receptacles for drainage? Further, if Theophilus were properly managed, he might be made to see that a serving man in livery was demanded of a Pensby.

The duke provided Judy with a length of Tabby silk for a wedding gown, and a necklace of garnets to hang round her pretty neck; with a Dutch oven for her kitchen, and two pairs of hand-woven linen sheets since "he'd stake his soul the hussy liked to lie soft."

If his Grace thought he had thus disposed of a dangerously saucy young minx, Judy was quite of another way of thinking. Torrish might be a stepping-stone; it was not going to be a resting place.

She was but just back from her honeymoon when she insisted that Theophilus should buy a clergy list. And when "the Owl" asked why he was to expend money on printed matter which was of no interest to him, Judy said he would know as soon as there was anything to tell.

For her own edification, she took down the names of the

livings in the gift of the duke, and the ages of the various incumbents.

Judy came to Torrish near Midsummer's Day.

It was midwinter when she suggested that her husband should accompany her to the County Ball.

Theophilus raised quite a number of objections. There would be eighteen miles to drive, along roads with ruts six inches deep at least. Possibly there might be floods. Possibly there might be snow. Besides, was such a worldly occasion quite suitable to a man of his cloth and his wife?

Judy supposed even perpetual curates wanted diversion, and assured him that the wife of one of them certainly did. As for such trifling inconveniences as the lack of a chariot (Theophilus advanced this as a last stand), had they not their own gig and their own nag to put between the shafts? She would borrow Farmer Rogers' big Shire horse, hitch him on before the nag with ropes attached to the end of either shaft, and put up the serving lad for a postilion.

The Reverend Theophilus was a poor hand with the ribbons. (At what was he not a poor hand!) So Judy saw her finery and his valise strapped on behind, and then took the reins herself.

They set off at daybreak, plodded along till dusk, made ten miles and "lay" for the night at an inn. Judy slept with her packages on one side of her, while her spouse lamented the "company" in the bed on the other.

The next evening saw them at the ball. Judy knew from the first moment that hers was the finest figure present. She gave the assembly ample opportunity to see that. Keeping Theophilus to it—as if he were a colt who did not want to take a fence—by a firm hand on his arm, she made him conduct her all round the room.

"A mere curate's wife—to give herself such airs! The

creature must be shown her place," said all the haughty dames.

" A demned fine woman ! " said the various husbands.

But to stand and be admired, or to stand and be stared at, was not at all what Judy proposed. She had reproached her husband, since ever she was settled at Torrish, saying that, for all the use he made of his great connections, he might as well be the relation of a chimney-sweep.

She was about to make the same observation as they stood side by side while the fiddles played and the company stood up for a country dance, when a very gay buck, a young man on the sunny side of thirty, to judge by his looks, approached Theophilus. Judy fluttered her Tabby skirt, asked herself if her husband could be such a dolt as not to present the young man.

In a moment the gallant was before her ; his peach-satin coat gold laced, diamond buckles on his shoes. Evidently a person of quality, and as certainly exceedingly well favoured.

" Our distant kinsman——" began Theophilus.

" Madam," said the young man, drowning the rest of the introduction. " Your humble servant."

Judy curtseyed.

The gallant proposed to engage her for the next dance.

Theophilus demurred. His cloth was to consider.

For one moment Judy thought of defying the whole bench of bishops, to say nothing of public opinion.

Then she cast down her eyes, regretted that her inclination and her obligation did not go hand in hand, let her lace handkerchief slip on to the floor, watched the kinsman pick it up before Theophilus realised that she had let it go.

When the lace trifle was restored to her, Judy curtseyed her thanks.

" Madam," said the young man. " At least let me conduct you to a seat."

She accepted his arm, saw by the many eyes on them, and the sour looks in those eyes, that she had captured quite a big fish.

The kinsman found a seat somewhat retired in an alcove, stood before her. Judy drew her Tabby skirt a little aside. He required no further bidding.

Some men, he opined, were blessed beyond their deserts. But a vicarage in the country ! Indeed, it were sinful to let roses bloom where no eyes could behold their beauty.

Judy answered that it only required one sun in a sky to make a heavenly day.

The young man edged a little nearer. He took her handkerchief out of her hand, gave it as his opinion that it was not worthy to be carried by such pretty fingers. Spoke of the lace of Brussels, of the point of Venice.

" You have come back from the Grand Tour ? " asked Judy.

" Only from Paris," returned the young man.

" But were not the elegants returning to Paris ? " Judy went on. And the marvels, she understood, which were still to be seen there !

" There is one marvel at any rate nearer home," answered the gallant.

Judy cast down her eyes.

The young man pressed still nearer.

The Master of the Ceremonies bowed before the pair. It grieved him to intrude. But supper awaited, and my lady Hawkesley——

" Lord ! " interrupted the young man. " And must I hand down that fat old dowager ? "

The Master of the Ceremonies said that my lady was hardly over forty, and held to be a fine figure of a woman.

" With a wench for a daughter, already as fat as herself," grumbled Judy's cavalier.

" La ! la ! " retorted Judy. " A gilded wench, if, as one hears, the young lady's uncle shook the pagoda tree ! " And then she said she would thank one of the gentlemen to conduct her back to her husband.

The kinsman pushed aside the official.

Judy made the most of the progress. She knew that once she returned to Theophilus the ball for her would be over.

The candles glittered in the great crystal chandeliers. More candles twinkled their light on to the gold-washed mouldings of the big room. If many eyes had followed her as she entered, more eyes followed her now that her Tabby silk flaunted side by side with the peach-satin coat. Was this one hour to last her all her life ? Was she to wither and grow old in a country vicarage ? Possibly to bear children to her lumpish husband and ultimately become all but senile, to quaver out reminiscences of her one great evening which no one would believe ? Judy thought not.

" Who is the young man ? " she whispered to Theophilus as soon as the buck had taken his leave.

" My love ! Surely you are aware," answered Theophilus.

" How could I know ! " retorted Judy. " You named him so ill, that I caught no more than that he was a connection."

" My love ! " said Theophilus again, and Judy wished the man would not begin with " my love " each time he opened his mouth. " That is the Captain Hercules Pensby."

" The next duke ! " breathed Judy.

" When Providence sees fit to take my honoured patron to a better world," said the curate.

Judy lay awake that night with the Reverend Theophilus snoring by her side, and her finery, looking ghostly in the

moonlight, spread out in the comfortless room where they "lay."

Judy fell to making plans, devising expedients. She must escape from Torrish-on-the-Marsh. The living of Markham St. Cedd was vacant. Yesterday she had thought that was too high for her flight. To-night she thought otherwise. Markham was the "plum" of the livings in the duke's gift. It was looked on as a stepping-stone to high preferment—even to a bishopric.

Judy had a sense of humour. She shook the creaking bed, she laughed so heartily to think of the Reverend Owl in lawn sleeves being addressed as "my lord."

Then her lips snapped together. A bishop was "my lord," but his wife remained plain mistress.

The late dawn broke. Judy rose. Looked out. The world was white. Her first thought was that the downfall of snow would make the roads worse going. The next instant, in her night-shift as she was, she curtseyed to—apparently nothing at all.

Judy roused Theophilus; urged that they set off betimes. He was at one with the wise decision of "my love," but when they and their packages were bestowed in the gig and the lady directed the lad on the Shire to turn up the market hill, Theophilus protested that his wife had mistaken the way.

"Not at all," the lady snapped. "We came by the valley. We go back over the down."

"But it is nigh half as far again," complained her spouse. "And the weather increasing intemperate."

"Less snow will lie in the open than in the hollow," vouchsafed Judy.

The progress was difficult. The nag laboured in the shafts. The Reverend Theophilus sat, his face almost hidden behind the turned-up collar of his travelling cloak and the extra

muffler his wife had so thoughtfully wound about his ears.

"But, my love! you impede my vision," the good man protested. "You have nigh entirely covered up my eyes, my love."

"What is there to see?" asked Judy. "Besides, better a little darkness than another attack of the tic douloureux. And you have not on your spectacles."

"You would have them packed in the valise," mumbled Theophilus.

"Lest the metal of their rims might attract the frost to your eyes," answered Judy.

Going by the down they had to pass the gates into the park at Pensweyre. Judy wondered if his Grace were in residence. So much—everything, in fact—depended on whether the Duke of Pensweyre were in residence.

The road was downhill now. On the windward side the snow was drifted almost as high as the thorn bushes.

"Take care!" Judy called to the serving lad. "Keep to the middle of the road, or you will have us into the drift."

The twin park lodges, built in the Italian manner, were in sight. The great iron gates, surmounted with the coronet, showed black against the snow: Judy fancied that beyond them she could see the marking of hoofs. Good! That argued that his Grace was at home.

Theophilus was taken with a fit of coughing. He choked and choked, pulled the muffler off his face, and at the same instant there was a scream from Judy. The nag swerved sideways, plunged into the snowdrift, took the gig with it, overturned it, and Judy and the curate and the ball finery were all thrown out on to the snow.

The serving lad on the Shire kept the road. He made for the lodge, brought help.

The nag was cut out of the shafts, pushed, pulled, tugged

back on to the highway; the gig righted. Theophilus, none the worse, was helped on to his feet, but his lady moaned and declared she could not move. She felt pains all over her. They must send to the great house. If only for charity's sake, they could not be refused a night's lodging.

Thus it befell that Judy and her husband spent the night under the ducal roof. He in one room, with a hot posset liberally seasoned with rum. She wrapped in hot flannel, and so efficiently ministered to by the duke's head woman that presently her groans ceased, and the next afternoon, being loath (so she said) to trespass on such magnificent hospitality, Judy dressed herself and descended.

In the hall burned a great fire of logs; before it she found Theophilus, three parts asleep.

Judy knew the duke was in the house. He had sent compliments to Mistress Pensby and hoped she was doing well.

Theophilus suggested that if his wife were fit to travel, there was daylight enough for them to get at least a stage on the way home.

"And leave without as much as an expression of gratitude!" Indeed! Judy said, she was not so wanting in manners; and her husband ought not to be, seeing how he was bred!

Theophilus looked uneasy. When his wife threw his connections at him, then there generally followed some move which troubled his retired nature.

A hearty voice called for a tankard of beer, and Judy knew that the duke was at hand.

He came in, a bluff man, with little eyes, which sometimes saw more than was convenient, short of neck, stout of person.

Judy rose and languidly made his Grace a curtsey.

"Gad! madam!" said the duke. "To venture with a gig and a nag so far—and in such a season as this!"

"Your Grace forgets the Shire horse and the serving lad," said Judy. "If it had not been for them, Mr. Pensby and I had been like to have frozen in the ditch. And if it had not been for your Grace's hospitality, I might have been incommoded for life from the bruising my frame sustained."

"Tush!" said his Grace. He meant to say that bruises were evanescent things; and besides, that it served the lady right for going gadding about—and she a parson's wife! Instead, he happened to look into Judy's face. Her eyes were inviting him to laugh with her. Laugh! What about? Was the Duke of Pensweyre to participate in merriment whenever it pleased the wife of a curate (perpetual though he be) to invite him!

Instead of being lofty, the duke looked again.

Gad! and he'd always liked a saucy wench. Besides, the baggage was good-looking. Demned good-looking. He'd bet she could be a pretty spitfire, though she had married the milksop who stood fidgeting from one foot to another at his side, as meekly as a half-fledged pigeon.

The duke began to think it might be wiser if the curate's lady passed another night under his roof, and said so.

Judy swept him her deepest reverence.

His Grace was too kind! too generous!

As she rose from her curtsey, she put her hand to her side, a little cry escaped her. She swayed.

It was nothing. Just a twinge. Judy believed the body of the gig caught her a blow as they went over. The pain did make her come over a little giddy.

The duke offered his arm. Conducted Judy to the day-bed. Himself assisted to pull it towards the blaze. He insisted on Theophilus taking a tankard of ale with him. After that

the curate slept; which was, perhaps, not wholly a surprise to the duke, nor to Judy.

The duke looked at the young woman.

Devil take her! her eyes were fine! Her shape, what he could see of it, perfect. His Grace remembered that thirty years ago he had been considered a regular rogue with the women.

"I tell you," he repeated, with the insistence of a man of few ideas, "it was ill-advised to venture so far afield."

"Your Grace, as usual, speaks true. Torrish-on-the-Marsh is lost to the world," Judy agreed. But the stout man felt that Mistress Pensby was putting words into his mouth that he had not uttered.

"Now what, by the lord Harry, is the woman trying to get at?" he asked himself.

The big wood fire flickered; the elderly man had been afield all day; beer was heavy stuff. . . .

Judy smiled. She went on smiling.

"Gad! madam!" spluttered the duke. "Your servant, madam. How can I oblige you?"

"The living of Markham St. Cedd is vacant," sighed Judy.

"You keep an eye on my presentations?" asked the duke, suspicious at once, since he was importuned so often.

"My husband and I owe our well-being to your Grace," answered Judy. "Would it be aught but natural that we should watch the interests of your Grace—from afar?"

"From close to, it would seem, madam," said the duke, half in amusement, half in displeasure. "And you don't go after little fish. Markham St. Cedd is my fattest living."

"Markham St. Cedd is well in the world," said Judy. "And your Grace yourself just now animadverted on my being so far from it."

The door behind them opened.

A young man stood looking from the duke to the pretty woman.

"Hercules!" exclaimed his Grace. "I thought you set out for my lord Hawkesley's."

"I turned back," said the young man. "My horse cast a shoe."

His eyes sought Judy's. She knew he lied. She knew why he had lied. How had he heard?

Her bosom heaved. She looked again. There was that in the face of the heir to the dukedom of Pensweyre which she had never expected to see.

Her mind raced as water over a mill weir. There were two ways open to her. The golden path of dalliance, or the way to substantial advantage. Which should she take? Her heart thumped against her side. Young men were fickle. The living of Markham St. Cedd was not only solidly advantageous, it would be enduring.

To Hercules she offered her hand, excused herself for not rising.

"To find you able to leave your room reassures me," Captain Pensby answered. "But to be precipitated into the snow! To have your vehicle fall on you! 'Tis a thousand mercies no bones were broken. How did it happen?"

At that moment Theophilus awoke. Heard the question, was so bewildered between the beer which still addled his brain, his unexpected surroundings and the reappearance of the young soldier—by whom, in his mild way, he had been a trifle disconcerted the evening of the ball—that he plunged into the conversation.

"That, if I may be permitted to say so, is precisely what puzzles me," he said. "My wife is practised with the reins. Yet," turning to Judy, "if I mistake not, my love, you pulled the wrong one when we came to the drift."

The fire blazed up. Showed the pictures of the duke's ancestors on the wall. He had no child, and this young spark of a nephew, who ought to have been pursuing an advantageous alliance, had turned back. Why?

Judy took her time. She knew that the young man was watching her as intently as his uncle, but with quite another look on his face.

"To be sure," she said, and she addressed Theophilus, who saw no more of what was passing than if he had been looking on from the top of the new Royal Assurance Building in London Town. "My fingers were all thumbs, my hands were so cold. But methinks," and now she challenged the duke himself, "that my reverend husband has been led away by your Grace's hospitality, for he had not on his spectacles. And he protests, whenever he has mislaid them and enjoins me to find them, that he cannot see his hand before his face without them."

Then Judy besought Theophilus to assist her to rise.

Captain Hercules anticipated him.

She was still so stiff that she had to lean on the young man's arm. Thus supported, she assured the duke that she would be so far recovered on the morrow as to be able to set out, but it were better that she should seek her chamber at once.

"And, my love," she said to Theophilus, "let me advise you not to be late in seeking yours."

She disengaged herself from the soldier's arm, wished his Grace good-night.

The duke but bowed.

She wished the Captain Pensby might have a better journey on the morrow.

"On the *morrow*, madam . . ." said the young man. "When the morrow comes . . . I shall do myself the pleasure of seeing

for myself if your equipage is in condition to travel for such a distance over such winter roads."

"Torrish is a full two days' journey from here," Judy admitted.

"Madam," said the duke, speaking at last, "Markham St. Cedd is a full week's journey from here."

"Markham St. Cedd," answered Judy, "is doubtless as far removed as your Grace describes; but when one gets there, it must be a vastly diverting place in which to pass one's days."

The duke bowed.

The lady curtseyed.

"My love," said Judy to her husband, but she looked at the red-faced, stout man. "Might it not be as well, when you retire, if you seek my chamber. We must be up betimes to-morrow. You are a heavy sleeper, and were there no one to wake you, we might miss the pick of the morning."

And Theophilus Pensby never could understand how he came to be preferred to the living of Markham St. Cedd.

FRANK O'CONNOR

Michael's Wife

I

The station—it really is only a siding with a shed—was empty but for the station-master and himself. When he saw the station-master change his cap he rose. From far away along the water's edge came the shrill whistle of the train before it puffed into view with its leisurely air that suggested a trot.

Half a dozen people alighted and quickly dispersed. In one who lingered and looked up and down the platform he recognised Michael's wife. At the same moment she saw him, but her face bore no smile of greeting. It was the face of a very sick woman.

" Welcome, child," he said, and held out his hand. Instead of taking it, she threw her arms about him and kissed him on the cheek. His first impulse was to discover if anyone had noticed, but almost immediately he felt ashamed of the thought. He was a warm-hearted man, and the kiss silenced an initial doubt. He lurched out before her with the trunk, while she carried the two smaller bags.

" 'Tis a long walk," he said with embarrassment.

" Why ? " she asked wearily. " Can't I drive with you ? "

" You'd rather have McCarthy's car, but 'tisn't back from Cork yet."

" I would not. I'd rather drive with you."

" 'Tis no conveyance," he said, referring to the old cart. Nevertheless he was pleased. She mounted from behind and sat on the trunk. He lifted himself in after her, and they jolted down the village with the bay on their left. Beyond the village they turned off the road and climbed a steep hill. Through a hedge of trees the bay grew upon the sight with a wonderful brightness because of the dark canopy of leaves. On and up, now to right, now to left until the trees ceased, the bay disappeared over the brow of a hill, and they drove along a sunlit upland road with sunken fences. Hills like mattresses rose to their right, a brilliant green except where they were broken by clumps of furze; a bog, all brown with bright pools and tall grey reeds, flanked the road. She seemed to take it in with unseeing eyes.

" Ye were in about eight, I'd say," he commented, breaking the silence.

" Oh, yes. About that."

" I seen ye."

" You did ? "

" I was on the look-out. When she rounded the Head I ran in and told the wife ' Your daughter-in-law's coming.' She nearly kilt me when she seen 'twas only the ould liner."

The girl smiled wearily.

" Look round you now and you'll see something," he added proudly.

She half raised herself on the edge of the cart and looked in the direction his head indicated. The land dropped suddenly away from beneath their feet, and the open sea, speckled white with waves and seagulls' wings, stretched out before them. The hills, their flanks patterned with the varying colours of

the fields, flowed down to it in great unbroken curves, and the rocks looked very dark between their wind-flawed brightness and the brightness of the water. In little hollows nestled houses and cottages, diminutive and quaint, and mostly of a cold, startling whiteness that was keyed up here and there by the spring-like colour of fresh thatch. In the clear air the sea was spread out like a great hall with all its folding doors thrown wide, a dancing floor, room beyond room, each narrower and paler than the last, till on the farthest reaches steamers that were scarcely more than dots jerked to and fro as on a wire.

Something in the strange fixity of the girl's pose made Tom Shea shout the mare to a standstill.

"That house beyond," he said, "the one with the slate roof on the hill, there's your home, girleen."

With a sudden access of tenderness he looked down at her quizzically from under his black hat. This stranger girl with her American clothes and faintly American accent was his son's wife and would some day be the mother of his grandchildren. Her hands were gripping the front of the cart, and the tears poured down her cheeks. She made no effort to restrain herself or conceal them, nor did she turn her eyes from the sea. He remembered a far-away evening when he had returned like this, having seen off his son, and understood.

"Yes," he said after a moment's silence. "'Tis so, 'tis so."

A woman with a stern and handsome face stood in the doorway. As everything in Tom seemed to revolve about a fixed point of softness—his huge frame, his comfortable paunch, his stride, his warm, round face with the twinkling brown eyes and the grey moustache—so everything in her seemed to obey a central reserve. She might be passionate

but never emotional: hers was a nature refined to the point of hardness, and while her husband took colour from everything about him, her circumstances or acquaintance would, you felt, have no effect on her.

One glance was sufficient to show her that he had already surrendered. She, her look seemed to say, would not give in so easily. But sooner than he she saw the signals of fatigue.

"You're tired, child," she exclaimed.

"I am," replied the girl, resting her forehead for a moment in her hands. In the kitchen she removed her hat and coat and sat at the head of the table where the westering light caught her. She was very dark, but the pallor of illness had bleached the dusk from her skin; her cheekbones were high so that they formed transparencies beneath her eyes. It was a very Irish face, long and spiritual, with an inherent melancholy that might dissolve into sudden anger or equally sudden gaiety.

"You were a long time sick," said Maire Shea.

"I was."

"Maybe 'twas too soon for you to travel?"

"If I didn't I'd have missed the summer at home."

"So Michael said, so Michael said."

"Ah," declared Tom with burning optimism, "you won't be long pulling round now, with God's help. There's great air here, powerful air."

"You'll be finding us rough, simple poor people," added his wife with dignity, taking from him a parcel that contained a glass sugar-bowl to replace the flowered mug without a handle that had served them till now. "We're not used to your ways nor you to ours, but we have a great will to please you."

"We have," agreed Tom heartily. "We have indeed."

The young woman took no food, only sipped her tea that

smelt of burned wood, and it was clear, as when she tried to pour milk from the large jug, that she was completely astray in her new surroundings. And that acute sense of her discomfort put a strain on the two old people, on Tom especially, whose desire to make a good impression was general and strong. They sat there, almost as uncomfortable as herself, ashamed for the inadequacy of their home.

After tea she went up to the room to rest. Maire came with her.

" 'Tis Michael's room," she said. " And that's Michael's bed."

The bare, green-washed room with a low window looking on to the front of the house, an iron bed and an oleograph of the Holy Family made a strange frame for its guest. For a moment an old familiar feeling of wild jealousy stole over Maire Shea, but when the girl in undressing exposed the scar across her stomach she felt guilty.

" You'll sleep now," she said.

" I ought to."

Maire stole down the straight stair. Tom was standing in the doorway, his black hat over his eyes, his hands clasped behind his back.

" Well ? " he asked in a whisper.

" Whisht ! " she replied. " She shouldn't be travelling at all. I don't know what come over Michael to let her, and he knowing well we have no facility. The cut in her stomach— 'tis the length of your arm, God between us and misfortune ! She'll want a lot of rest."

" Would I go up and tell Kate not to come ? Herself and Joan will be in soon."

" 'Twould be no use. All the neighbours will be in."

" So they will, so they will," he admitted in a depressed tone.

Tom was particularly restless. After a while he went upstairs and came down again on tiptoe.

" She's asleep now. But whisper, Moll, she must have been crying."

" 'Tis weakness."

" Maybe she'd be a bit lonely ? "

" 'Tis weakness. She should never be travelling."

Later Kate and Joan arrived, and after them three or four other women. Twilight fell within the long whitewashed kitchen; and still they talked in subdued voices. Suddenly the door on the stairs opened and Michael's wife appeared. She seemed to have grown calmer, though she still retained something of the air of a sleep-walker, and in the half-light, with her jet-black eyes and hair, her long pale face had a curious ethereal beauty.

All of them felt ill-at-ease with her. Tom fussed about her in a helpless fidgety way till the women began to mock him. Even then a question put at random caused him to fret.

" Can't ye leave her alone now, can't ye ? Can't ye see she's tired ? Go on with yeer talk, leave ye, and don't be bothering the girl."

" No," she said, smiling, " I'm not so tired now." Her voice retained a memory of her native Donegal in a certain dry sweetness, as when she pronounced " now " as though it were " ny."

" Have a sup of this," urged Tom. " A wee sup—'twill do you no harm."

She refused the whisky, but two of the other women took it, and Tom, having first toasted " her lovely black eyes," drank a whole glassful without pausing for breath. He gave a deep sigh and filled the glass again before sitting down beside the open door. The sky turned deep and deeper blue above the

crown of a tree that looked in the low doorway and a star winked at the window-pane. Maire rose and lit the wall-lamp. From far away, in a lag between two headlands, a voice was calling and calling on a falling cadence " Taaamie, Taaamiee ! " and in the distance the call had a remote and penetrating sweetness. When it ceased, there came to their ears the noise of the sea, and suddenly it was night. The young woman drew herself up in her low chair, and they could see plainly the shiver that passed down her whole body. One of the women sighed and the kitchen was silent. The girl looked up.

" I'm sorry," she said quietly. " I was only a child when I left Ireland and 'tis all strange to me now."

" 'Tis surely," replied Kate heartily. " 'Tis lonely for you. You're every bit as strange here as we'd be in the heart of New York."

" Just so, just so," exclaimed Tom with approval.

" Never mind ! " cried Kate, laughing and slapping her knee. " I'll take your part."

" Deed and you will not," replied her brother with mock indignation. " Devil a one is going to look after that girl but meself."

" A deal she have to expect from wither of ye," added Maire dryly. " It wouldn't occur to ye that she should be in bed."

She dipped a candle in the fire and held it above her head. The girl followed her up the stairs. The others sat on and talked; then all took their leave together. Maire, busy about the yard, for a long time heard voices and footsteps coming back to her on the light land wind. She was thinking of the stranger. She had thought of her often before, but now she found herself nonplussed. It wasn't only that the girl was a stranger and a sick one at that, but—and this Maire had never

allowed for—she was the child of a strange world, the atmosphere of which had come with her, bewildering Maire's critical sense. Less clearly than Kate or Tom, yet clearly enough for all that, she realised that the girl was as strange amongst them as they would be in New York. In the clear starlight a cluster of whitewashed cottages stood out against the hillside like a frame of snow about its orange window-squares. For the first time Maire looked at it and, with a strange feeling of alienation, wondered what it was like to one unused to it.

A voice upstairs startled her. She turned in to see that Tom had disappeared. Heated a little with drink and emotion, he had tiptoed up the stairs and opened the girl's door. He was surprised to find her sitting on the low window-edge in her dressing-gown. From the darkness she was looking out with strange eyes on the same scene Maire had been watching with eyes grown too familiar, wondering perhaps what it seemed like to her.

" Are 'oo awake ? " he asked—a foolish question.

" Wisha, for goodness' sake will you come down and leave the girl sleep ? " came Maire's voice in irritation from the foot of the stairs.

" No, no, no," he whispered nervously.

" What is it ? " asked the girl.

" Are 'oo all right ? "

" Quite, thanks."

" We didn't disturb you ? "

" Not at all."

" Come down out of that, you old fool ! " cried Maire in an exasperated tone.

" I'm coming, I'm coming—Jasus, can't you give us a chance ? " he added angrily. " Tell me," this in a whisper, " the operation, 'twon't come against you ? "

He bent over her, hot and excited, his breath smelling of whisky.

" I don't understand you."

" Ah," he said in the same low tone, " wouldn't it be a terrible misfortune ? A terrible misfortune ! 'Tis great life in a house, a child is."

" Oh, no," she answered hastily. " It won't affect me like that."

" Are 'oo sure ? What did the doctors say ? "

" That it won't."

" Ah, glory be to the hand of God ! " he said, turning away, " 'tis a great ease to my mind to know that. A great ease, a great ease."

He stumbled downstairs to face his wife's anger that continued long after he had shut up the house for the night and retired to bed. Maire Shea had a bitter tongue when she chose to use it. She chose now. For weeks they had been keying themselves up for this day, to make a good impression on Michael's wife, and now it was spoiled, irretrievably spoiled, by a drunken fool of a man.

He, poor simple soul, turned and tossed, unable to sleep at the thought of the injustice of it. As though a man wouldn't want to know a thing like that, as though he mightn't ask his own daughter-in-law a civil question, without being told that he was worse than a black, a heathen savage from Africa, without niceness or consideration except for his own dirty gut !

He who tried to leave a good impression on the mind of every hog, dog and devil that came the road !

II

In the morning Michael's wife was somewhat better. The sun appeared only at intervals, but for the greater part of the

day she was able to sit by the gable where she had a view of the sea in shelter from the fresh wind. Occasionally Maire came and sat on a stool beside her. Maire asked no questions—her pride again—the girl still seemed to be too tired to understand or even be aware of the old woman's curiosity, and at first the conversation was strained, almost hostile. Then something seemed to tell the girl what it was that ailed Maire; curiosity for the minute trifles of their life in America, hers and Michael's; the details that had become so much part of her that she found it difficult to remember them. How much the maid was paid, how the milk was delivered, the apartment house with its central heating, the negro lift-hop, the street cars and the rest of it. Her mind seemed to embrace the old woman's vivid and unlettered mind, trying to construct a picture of the world in which her son lived.

At dinner-time Tom came in from the fields in a dirty old shirt and pants, his black hat shading his eyes.

" Listen, Annie," he said in a gruff frank tone, very different from that of the previous night, and he leaned against the wall beside her, his hands behind his back. " I have a word to say to you. Tell Michael he should write oftener to his mother. Women are like that. If 'twas your own son now, you'd understand."

" I know, I know," she said hastily.

" Of course you do. You're a fine, big-hearted girl, and don't think we're not grateful to you. The wife now, she's a decent woman, but she have queer ways. She wouldn't thank God Almighty to His face, and she'll never say it to you, but she said it to others, how good you were to us."

" Don't blame Michael," replied Annie in a low voice. " It isn't his fault."

" I know sure, I know."

" He never has time."

"Mention it to him though, you! Mention it to him. The letter to say you were coming, 'twas the first we had from himself for months. Tell him 'tis his mother, not me at all."

"If you only knew how he wanted to come!"

"Yes, yes, but 'twill be two years more before he can. Two years to one at his hour of life, 'tis only like to-morrow, but for old people that never know the time or the place. . . . And that itself, it may be the last he'll see of one or the other of us. And we've no one but him, Annie, more's the pity."

In a few days she had regained something of her strength. Tom cut her a stout ashplant, and she went for short walks, up to the post-office or down to the little harbour. Mostly she went alone. To Tom's delight the weather turned showery, but it never completely broke, and after the first few days of it, she no longer let it keep her within the house. All day long the horizon was peopled by a million copper-coloured cloudlets, tiny, rounded, packed back to the very limits of the sky like cherubs in a picture of the Madonna. Then they began to swell, like bubbles filling with air: one broke away from the mass, and then another; it grew into a race; they gathered, sending out dark streamers that blackened the day and broke the patina of the water with dark-green stormy paths; lastly, a shrill whistle of wind and wild driving rain enveloped everything in mist. She took shelter under a fence or at the lee-side of a rock, and watched the shower dissolve in golden points of light that grew into a sunlit landscape beyond; as the clouds, like children in frolic terror, scampered back to the horizon, the blue strip of sky they left broadening, the rain thinning, the fields and sea stripping off their scum of shadow until everything about her was sparkling and steaming again.

What it meant to the girl from America they could only guess from her looks when she returned after such a downpour.

Whenever she remained too long in the kitchen the shadow came on her once more, her mouth twitched and the tears rolled down her cheeks. Kate, who had seen many such cases in hospital, bade them take no notice.

She seemed to be very much drawn towards Kate and her sister and Tom noticed this with approval. Her walks often took her to the post-office, and there she sat for hours with the two sisters, often sharing their meals, and listening to Kate's tales of old times in the parish, about her father and mother, about Tom, but most frequently about Michael's youth.

Kate was a rare type, tall and bony with a long face, long nose, long protruding chin and wire spectacles. Her teeth, like those of her sister, had all rotted in sheer neglect. She was the sort country people describe as having a great heart. Fearless courage, intelligence and kindness go to make up the definition; Kate had all three. She was always busy, always chattering, always in good humour. Her brother, who was very proud of her, told Annie how she had gone off for an operation that was not expected to succeed, carrying a basket of eggs to sell so that she would not have her journey for nothing. Then she discovered that she had missed the bus, and walked twelve miles into Bandon rather than come back or trouble anyone for a lift. Her sister, on the other hand, was a nun-like creature. She had been in an asylum but was improving slowly. She had a wonderfully soft, round, gentle face, still with traces on it of a girlish complexion, a voice that seldom rose above a whisper, and the most lovely eyes; but when the cloud came on her she was perverse and obstinate. Joan was nominally the post-mistress, but it was Kate who did all the work.

As much as Michael's wife took to them they took to her. Joan would have wept her eyes out for a homeless dog, but Kate's sympathy was marked by a certain shrewdness, blended

with stoicism. Occasionally she said things that showed a surprising understanding.

"You hadn't much luck in your marriage," she said one day.

"How?" The young woman looked at her blankly.

"Though you're only married a year you had more than your share of trouble. No honeymoon, and then the sickness and now the separation. Nothing but separations."

"Yes," said Annie, her lips trembling. "Nothing but separations. We had seven months together—only seven months."

"Ah, God help you, I never saw a lonelier creature than you were the night you came. But don't take it to heart. 'Tis how we grow."

"Is it, I wonder?"

"'Tis, 'tis."

"That's what Father Coveney says," wailed Joan, "but I could never understand it meself. All the good people having all the troubles that don't deserve it, and the bad people getting off."

"You'll be happier for it in the latter end, and you've a good boy in Michael," said Kate. "Wisha, there I am again! Michael, Michael! 'Tis nothing but Michael with me."

"And why wouldn't you?"

"Because you must be sick of hearing me talking about him."

"No, I'm not, I'm not. And you're like Michael yourself."

"I am, is it?" exclaimed Kate with delight.

"You are. He takes after you more than anyone else, I think."

"Ah, now, I always said it! Didn't I, Joan? And why wouldn't he? Why wouldn't he? When his mother beat him 'twas up to me he came for comfort."

" He often said it—you made a man of him."

" I did that," said Kate proudly. " I did so. Musha, he was a wild boy, and there was no one to understand him when he was wild."

She was off again into reminiscences, but while she talked she did not cease to observe the girl sitting in the chimney corner. The girl's melancholy puzzled her, not so much for its own sake—wasn't it natural enough?—but because of a certain thing in her that suggested anything but softness. At the same time she had to admit that the melancholy did not come so often to the surface, as though returning health were bringing with it peace of mind.

" You're getting to like us, I think? " she said.

" I am," admitted the girl. " When I came first I was afraid."

" You won't be so glad to get back to the States."

" I wish I never saw the States again," said the girl bitterly.

" Oh, my! "

" It's true."

" Ah, well! Two years more and ye'll be back together. Then ye'll have the fine time. And what's a couple of years to a girl of your age? "

" More than you think."

" True, true, years are only as you feel them."

" And I feel I'll never come back to this place again."

" Ach, you're giving in to it again! And now, listen to me! 'Tis a thing I often said to Tom Shea. Why wouldn't ye come back? Why wouldn't ye, I say? Never mind your fool of a father-in-law telling you Michael wouldn't get a job. Why wouldn't he get a job as well as the rest of them? And only his father was a soft old fool he'd never have left the boy go away."

To Tom's disgust the weather cleared without a downpour, though there was little sun. Now, early and late Michael's wife was out, sitting on the rocks or striding off to the harbour or the village. She became a familiar figure along the roads in her blue dress with her ashplant. At first she stood a long way off, watching the men at the nets or sitting at the cross-road; as time went on she came closer, and one day a fisherman came up and spoke to her.

"You're Michael Shea's wife?"

"Yes."

"I was at school with him. Maybe you'd like a little row in a boat some time."

After that she went everywhere: into their houses, on to the quay and out in the boats when they were fishing. It was curious company for a girl, but all of them had known Michael as a boy, all had stories of him and his knowledge of boats and fishing, and after a day or two it was as though she had grown up in that place. Perhaps too she gathered something from those hours on the water, in little silent coves on grey days when the wind shook out a shoal of lights, or in the bay when the thunderous light moved swiftly, starting hares of brightness from every hollow, blue from the hills, violet from the rocks, primrose from the fields, and here and there a mysterious milky glow that might be rock or field or tree. Perhaps it deepened her knowledge, so that she no longer felt a stranger when she walked along the strand, listening to the tide expand the great nets of weed with a crisp, gentle pervasive sound like the sound of rain, or from her window saw the moon plunge its great silver drill into the water.

At any rate there was an astonishing change in her appearance as in her manner. She had filled out, her face had tanned, and the gloomy, distraught air had left it. Tom was proud of the change in her.

" There," he said proudly, " didn't I say we'd make a new woman of her? Would anyone know her for the girl she was the night she came? Would they? My God, the time she opened the door and walked down the stairs I thought her own were calling her."

Kate and Joan too were pleased. They liked her for her own sake and Michael's sake, but they had come to love her for the sake of her youth and freshness. Only Maire held her peace. Nothing had ever quite bridged the gap between the two women. And in every glance, in every word of Maire's there was an implicit question. But it was some time before she succeeded in infecting her husband with the disease. Then one day he came to Kate, looking troubled.

" Kate," he said, " 'tis about Michael's wife."

" Och aye! What about her? 'Tisn't complaining you are?"

" No, but tell me now what you think of her."

" What I think?"

" 'Tis Maire."

" Well?"

" She's uneasy."

" About what, erra?"

" She thinks the girl have something on her mind."

" Tom Shea, I tell you now as I told you before, your wife is a suspicious woman."

" Wisha, wisha, can't you leave what's done done? We know ye never agreed. But now, Kate, you can't deny she's a clever woman."

" And what does the clever woman think?"

" She thinks Annie had a row with Michael, that's what she thinks now, plain and straight, and I won't put a tooth in it."

" I doubt it."

" Well, now, it might be some little thing a few words would put right."

" And I'm to say the few words ? "

" Well, now, Kate, 'twas my suggestion, my suggestion entirely. The way 'tis with Maire, she might say too much or say too little."

" She would," agreed Kate grimly.

Next day she reported to him that the idea was absurd. He had to be content with that, for Kate too was a clever woman. But his wife's observations never ceased till they became a drag on his patience. He was a simple man who wished to indulge his affections as he pleased. Three weeks had passed and he found it almost intolerable. As usual he came to Kate.

" The worst of it is," he said, " she's making me as bad as herself. 'Tisn't that she says anything, but here I am all bothered so that I can hardly talk to the girl. I can't sleep with it. . . . And last night——"

" What happened last night ? "

" I heard her talking in her sleep."

" Michael's wife ? "

" Yes."

" And what harm if she do itself ? "

" No harm at all," shouted Tom in a rage, stamping up and down the kitchen. " No harm in the world, but, Chrisht, woman, I tell you it upset me ! "

" Here she is now," said Kate. " Here's the girl ye have all the connaisseuring about. Look at her, will you ! "

" Maire," said Tom that night as they were going to bed, " you're dreaming."

" How ? "

" About Annie."

" Maybe I am," she admitted grudgingly.

"You are."

"I had my reasons. But this while past she's different. Likely Kate said something to her."

"She did."

"That explains it so," said Maire complacently.

Two nights later he was wakened suddenly. He heard Michael's wife speaking in her sleep. She spoke in a low tone with long intervals of silence. The voice went on and on, very low, sometimes expressing, or so it seemed, a great joy, sometimes as it were pleading. But the impression it left most upon him was one of intimacy and tenderness. Next morning she came down late, her eyes red. It was an hour or more before she came to herself. And that afternoon a letter came from her aunt in Donegal. When she had read it she announced that she must leave on the following day.

"You'll be glad to go," said Maire.

"I'll be sorry," replied the girl simply.

"If a letter comes from Michael?"

"It won't come here. I didn't expect to be here so long."

Maire gave her a long questioning look. For the first time the girl gave it back, and for a moment they looked into one another's eyes, mother and wife.

"At first," said Maire, turning her gaze on the fire, "I didn't trust you. I'm a straight woman, and I'll tell you that. I didn't trust you."

"And now?"

"Right or wrong, I think my son chose well for himself."

"I hope you'll always think it," replied the girl in the same tone.

But now the positions of Tom and his wife were reversed. It was he who was upset. Before dusk rain began to fall in

torrents. He went out late to Kate and sat between his two sisters, arguing.

"There's a woman all out," he said bitterly. "She upsets me, and then sits down on my troubles. What's on the girl's mind for her to go talking in her sleep? There's something queer about her, something I can't make out. I've a good mind to send word to Michael."

"What would you say?" asked Kate. "Disturbing him without cause! Can't you be sensible?"

"I can't," he replied crossly. "She's here in my charge, and if anything happened her——"

"Nothing will."

"But if it did?"

"She's all right. She got back her health that none of us thought she would. Besides, she's going from you."

"That's what's worrying me," he confessed.

He returned late through the driving rain. The women had gone to bed. He turned in, but somehow he could not sleep. The wind had risen from the sea and rattled the window-panes. All at once he caught it again, the damned talking. He lay quiet in order not to wake Maire. Long intervals of silence and then the voice again. And then suddenly, in three anguished mounting breaths, "Michael! Michael! Michael!"

He felt a cold hand touching his forehead and his heart. For a moment it was as though Michael had really entered the room above his head, across all those hundreds of miles of water and storm and darkness, as though all the inexpressible longing of his young wife had incarnated him beside her. He made the sign of the cross as if against some devilish power. And after that there was silence but for the sound of the rising storm.

Next morning he would have avoided her eyes if anyone

could have done so. But there was something about her that made him look in spite of himself. A nervous exaltation had crystallised in her, making her seem ethereal, remote and lovely. Because of the rain that still continued to pour, Maire would have had her stay, but she insisted.

She went out in heavy boots and raincoat to say good-bye to Kate and Joan. Joan wept. " Two years," said Kate in her hearty way, " 'twill be no time passing." When she left it was as if a light had gone out in the lonely childless house.

Maire's good-bye was soberer but generous too.

" I know Michael is in good hands," she said.

" Yes," said the girl with a radiant smile. " He is."

And they drove off through the rain. The sea on which she looked back was blinded by it, all but a leaden strip beside the rocks. She crouched over her trunk with averted head. Tom, an old potato-bag across his shoulders, drove into it, head down. The fear had not left him. He looked down at her once or twice, but her face was hidden in the collar of her coat. They left the seemingly endless, wind-swept upland road and plunged down among the trees that creaked and roared above their heads, spilling great handfuls of water into the cart. His fear became a terror. When he stood before the carriage door he looked at her appealingly. He could not frame the question that he looked; it was a folly he felt must pass from him unspoken; so he asked it only with his eyes, and with her eyes she answered him; a look of ecstatic fulfilment.

The whistle went. She leaned out of the carriage window as the train lurched forward, but he was no longer looking. He raised his hands to his eyes and swayed to and fro. For a long time he remained like that, a ridiculous figure with the old potato-bag and the little pool of water that gradually gathered on the platform about his feet.

LIAM O'FLAHERTY

B*lood*

The baby rabbit was sitting in the sun just by the entrance to his burrow. He was half asleep. His big ears sloped along his back and his sides heaved gently with his breathing. Now and again a slight breeze came up from the stream, raised the brown fur on his side and made silver furrows in it. When the breeze touched him, the little rabbit sniffed the air and wanted his mother to come and give him suck.

He was now big enough to graze for his own food along the fertile bank of the stream, but all his brothers and sisters had been killed by a weasel, and for that reason there was still enough milk in his mother's drying udder to feed him. So he had not yet been forced to pluck the short blades of grass with his teeth and chew them. All he did was to come out of his burrow, hop about in the sun, smelling the ground, or sit attentively listening to sound, until something menacing came to his ears and he dived into his burrow for shelter.

At the moment, there was perfect peace by the bank of the stream. The sun was still at its height, although it was long past noon. It shone full on the water-fall, that poured with a wild, sad murmur from a narrow gorge, lined with a thick growth of flowering heather. Like a wide-spread horse's

mane, the water poured from the gorge, thick and brown at its base, where it was coloured by the earth and heather, and then, falling, it widened out into a silver sheet. There was a long, deep pool below the fall. Flies skimmed its surface and trout leaped at their gaudy wings. At the near end of the pool, just beneath where the little rabbit dozed, there was a line of boulders thrown across the stream. A wild duck stood on one leg in a hollow between two of the boulders. The duck was asleep, with its bill tucked under one wing.

All was still, except for the drowsy music of the water-fall. Some time ago, when the duck swooped down, quacking, on to the boulders, the little rabbit had taken fright and darted into his burrow. But when he peered out again and watched the duck for a long time, as it fed in the stream, prodding with its beak, he became used to the bird and feared it no more. Now it was asleep and it had become part of the surroundings. There was nothing to be seen of it between the boulders except its flashing wing feathers and a little of its yellow beak.

Suddenly the duck awoke and withdrew its bill from beneath its wing. It raised its neck and turned its head from side to side, listening. Then it began to bob its head and put both feet on the ground. It moved a little to one side, jerking its head and its tail. Then it quacked. It was a low quack, scarcely audible, but it startled the little rabbit. He became wide awake and moved. At first he laid his ears flat along his back and bent down low to the earth on his stomach. Then he raised himself gradually, thrust forward his ears and listened. He watched the duck.

Now the duck was very excited and began to quack continuously. Shaking its gullet, it paddled about on the boulder, taking tiny steps. The little rabbit became very

curious, because he failed to discover the cause of the bird's unrest. There was neither sound nor smell. He raised himself on his haunches, thrust his ears as far forward as he could and let his fore-legs drop along his breast. He listened and watched intently. He began to get afraid.

Then the duck uttered a loud quack and swept from the boulders with a great swishing of its wings. It swung in a half circle and then shot upwards into the sky, gathering speed as it rose, until it disappeared over a clump of trees farther down the bank of the stream. The rabbit dropped his fore-legs to the ground and gathered himself together to make a dive into his burrow. Yet he did not move. The swoop of the duck and the loud swishing of its wings had so startled him that he could not move. So he remained where he was, crouching.

And then, as he lay crouching, he began to feel afraid. It was the same feeling he had experienced a few days previously, when his last remaining brother, having hopped into the clump of briars on the left, had suddenly begun to scream. There was a strange feeling in the air, the nearness of a sinister force, that prevented movement. At that time, however, he had been able to move after a little while and run into his burrow. Now it was different.

The sinister feeling increased. There was absolute silence, and there was nothing strange to smell, and yet he felt the approach of the sinister force, something unknown and monstrous. In spite of himself, although he wanted awfully to hide from it, he looked in the direction whence he sensed the approach of the enemy. His head shook violently as he glanced towards the boulders that lay across the stream. And then he began to scream. A weasel was crossing the line of boulders.

The baby rabbit had never before seen a weasel, but the

long brown body, that moved with awful speed, making no sound, drove him crazy with horror. The weasel paused in the middle of the stream, raised his powerful head and stared at the rabbit, his wicked eyes fixed. And then, keeping his head raised and his eyes on his prey, he glided like a flash to the bank. He disappeared for a fraction of a second behind a stone in his path, and then appeared again, standing against the little stone, staring fixedly. Now his powerful head, raised above the long brown barrel of his body, was like the boss of a hammer, poised to strike. The rabbit's screaming became wilder. He was now completely in the brute's power, mesmerised by the staring eyes and by the sinister presence.

The weasel, having mesmerised his prey, was on the point of gliding forward to his meal of blood, when the baby rabbit's mother dashed from the clump of briars on the left, screaming as she ran. She moved in a strange fashion, leaping sideways like a dog trying to sight a hare in a field of corn. It was a grotesque dance, to the accompaniment of wild screams. She passed directly in front of the weasel and circled him twice, threatening him each time with her upraised paws. She drew his eyes from her little one towards herself. When they were fixed on her, she dropped to the ground and began to tremble. She crawled away slowly towards the clump of briars, continuing the while to scream. Then she lay down. The weasel slid from the stone and moved towards her swiftly.

As soon as the weasel's eyes left him, the baby rabbit stopped screaming. Then he began to crawl away upstream. He moved as if his back were hurt. He was almost paralysed, and it hurt him terribly to draw his hind legs up under his belly in order to hop forward. But the farther away he went from the weasel, the lesser grew the pain in his joints,

until at last it seemed that a weight was lifted from his body and he was able to run, staggering a little, into a great hummock of grass that grew around a gorse bush. He bored a hole through the long, coarse grass with his snout, and then lay still in the very middle of it, panting. There he fell asleep.

When he awoke it was late in the evening and the sun had set. He felt very hungry. By now, his paroxysm of fear and the weasel's staring eyes were only a vague memory. He wanted to suck his mother and satisfy his hunger. He backed out of his lair in the grass to look for her. He would find her in the burrow, where she always fed him in the evening.

He ran back to the burrow as fast as he could, the little white button of his tail hopping as he ran in the twilight like a ball of cotton carried on the wind. He dived eagerly into the burrow and searched for her. The burrow was empty. He came out again, sat on his haunches and raised his ears, smelling and listening. In the distance, frogs were croaking in a marsh. A curlew called on the wing. A multitude of other birds, about to perch for the night, were warbling. He dropped his forelegs and hopped about, smelling the ground, now and again thrusting forward one ear and then another, listening. All round the mouth of the burrow, among the thrown-out earth, that was pebbled with round droppings, he could smell her, but the smell was old and faint. He went farther from the hole, nosing the ground, in search of a fresher scent.

At last he found one, the track on which she had danced before the weasel. He followed it carefully, round and round, until he came to her, over near the clump of briars. She was lying on her side, already stiff in death. Her udder was towards him, and he was on the point of thrusting at the nearest teat with his snout, when he drew back slightly,

astonished at the unusual odour which her body exuded. He crouched, with his head close into his neck. Then he thrust forward his head once more timidly, and gently smelt her, all along her body. Just beneath her ear the smell was very strange and terrifying. There was a little hole there, and the rim of the hole was clotted with dried blood. As soon as he sniffed the blood, the paroxysm of fear returned. He leaped backwards, sat up on his hind legs, stared at the corpse, squealed and fled to his burrow. He lay in the innermost corner of it, panting.

For a long time he lay there, his head pressed hard against the cold earth. Then again, hunger began to gnaw at his bowels. His hunger gradually became stronger than his fear, driving out the memory of the horrid, clotted blood around the hole beneath his mother's ear. He forgot his mother. His hunger grew fierce, drowning memory. He crawled out of the burrow.

Night had now fallen and the moon was out, gilding the grassy slope with a fairy light. Several rabbits from neighbouring burrows were grazing in the moonlight. Two little ones, about his own age, were chasing one another. He hopped over to them and began to nibble at the grass.

Dew was now falling on the grass, making it juicy and sweet, just like his mother's milk. When he had eaten his fill, he joined in the dance of the other little rabbits.

Now he was no longer afraid and he had completely forgotten his mother. He was one of the herd.

VINCENT SHEEAN

Romance and Revolution.

III

I

BETWEEN July 5, when the Revolutionary government in Hankow fell, and I said good-bye to Rayna Prohme, and September 18, when I went up the steps of the Metropol Hotel in Moscow, a profound change had taken place in the texture and organisation of my mind with respect to all the subjects brought together in these articles. To put such complicated processes into words is difficult to the point of impossibility: the words are gross with implications, refusing, as often as not, to bear their own exact meanings; it is too late in the history of a heterogeneous language to strip any word quite clean. But, as nearly as I can define it, the change had consisted in a steady, orderly concentration of thought and feeling within this cycle of experience—to which I have given the name "revolution"—and, concurrently but less precisely, within the subsidiary or preparatory cycles outside it, upon a single phenomenon containing the principles of energy diffused (but neither organised nor put to work) throughout the system. The central

phenomenon—the sun of this solar system—was Rayna Prohme. During the weeks after the fall of Hankow, when her fate as a human creature (as Human Being Number Eight Trillion or so) was seriously disturbing my molecular activity as another member of the same series, her essential principle was taking its natural place at the centre of my world of ideas; the first process was minute, demands the microscope, and has no important place in a narrative that is not concerned with strictly private matters; but the second process, for which the telescope is the appropriate instrument, involved every fragment of material within my experience of life or view of the world.

When I turned from the hall-porter's desk at the Metropol and saw her coming towards me the process was already completed, but it needed that moment of blinding significance to become irrevocable.

I have never known a moment like it. For six weeks I had imagined her dead, torn into pieces by a mob, broken and sunk in the mud of the Yangtze-kiang or buried obscurely, after days of torture, in some dreary and forgotten Chinese field. These morbid fancies had alternated with others in which I imagined meeting her again, but it had never been wholly credible to me that I might find her, alive and well, by the mere effort of going to Moscow. And yet here she was, coming swiftly across the hall, laughing, hands stretched out, her eyes alight beneath the conflagration of her hair. A stab of joy, a flood of relief, and a tempest of excitement, all took less time than it takes to write the two syllables of her name—Rayna.

II

This being so, I must face the problem of stating, as clearly as possible, the nature of our relationship then and afterward. It was not a sexual relationship—at least not as

the phrase is currently understood. Neither in words nor in gestures did it take the forms of intimacy known to the readers of a thousand erotic novels. I shall not attempt to explain the mystery of an all-pervading, all-controlling emotion that had no physical basis, but it existed. If these words fall under the eyes of a reader who cannot believe such a thing possible, he had better stop reading at once, for it will be assumed from here onward that the fact is plain.

And from that moment of reunion onward it was impossible to seek the relationships that seemed necessary to life (a relation of one to many, a place in the chain of cause and effect) without reference to this solar phenomenon, this sun perceived, lost, and found again, a focus of reality for which the only solid expression was a slip of a girl with red hair. The issues that converged for me upon her fiery head were the most serious any human being has to face, and they converged there, most of all, because she had faced them first. When I said, in the account of our meeting in Hankow, that we were inescapably magnetised towards the same pole of reality, I was describing a state of things that had now ceased to exist; for now, as we met in the hall of the Metropol, she had already moved so far towards that pole as to become part of its immediate radiation. The problems of minor movement no longer counted for her; they had been solved; she had reached her centre. If we define this central reality as the meaning (or conviction of meaning) in the existence of an individual, his sense of exact position with respect to the multitudinous life of his species in its physical environment, it may be seen that, for persons like ourselves, it had to be the whole thing, the sum of good. I say " for persons like ourselves," because there existed other kinds of persons unmagnetised to any central reality—willing to ex-

pend their allotment of time without attempting to relate it to the time of which it was a segment—and still other kinds contented in this necessity by the easy promises of supernatural religion and the immortality of the soul. A settled polarity was harder to establish for persons like ourselves because we sought it in the natural world of men and things; but once reached (as she had reached it) it gave the only satisfaction that could inform a life and last it out.

These were the processes that had supervened upon the separation in Hankow for the two of us. She had reached her central reality (which was also mine) and become part of it. As she came across the hall of the Metropol I knew that my world revolved about her. If this sounds like the language of sexual or romantic attachment it is the fault of the words, so hard to dig out pure from their tangle of associations; but in simple fact it was not so. The feeble, perfumed sentiments, the romantic illusions, the limited personal desires and disappointments of boudoir "love" had no part in the moment (it was a moment sharp as a dagger); nor did they afterwards influence the course of our related systems of thought and feeling in the spiral plunge to catastrophe. This tragedy may have contained love (what did it not contain?), but if so it was love resolved into the largest terms of which such personal emotions are capable, related to the whole life of mankind and the eternal effort of the human spirit to find its own place in the universe. I turned and met her, and we both laughed.

"I knew you'd turn up," she said. "I expected you any day."

III

For the next week everything in Moscow took its place for me as a subsidiary part of the continuous conversation

with Rayna Prohme. It was a conversation in which no debate was possible. Fresh from China, imbued with the feelings and ideas of Hankow as they had been strengthened by the opposition of Peking, I had no desire to attack the decisions she had made. They seemed to me the best decisions. She was going to continue her work for the Chinese revolutionary movement as long as it was required, but when—as she foresaw clearly—the parts of that movement would disintegrate, sending its vital element underground and leaving its bourgeois remnant stranded on the surface, she wanted to take a direct part in the work of the forbidden and secret organisation.

She had decided that life was not possible for her on any other terms: that she could not bear the spectacle of the world under its present arrangements, and that her place was within the organisms struggling to upset and rearrange it. This necessity was not wholly the result of social or economic theory, although she had a solid basis of training in the social sciences and was convinced of her solutions (the Leninist solutions); a deeper necessity had driven her onward. She felt a genuine relationship to all forms of human life. That was the essence of it. To her the Chinese coolie was another part of the whole life, rich, various, cruel, and immense, that she shared to the extent of her limits in space and time. She could not see a Chinese coolie beaten and half-starved, reduced to the level of the beasts, without feeling herself also beaten and half-starved, degraded and oppressed; and the part of her that rebelled against this horror (her mind and spirit) was inflexibly resolved, by now, never to lie down under the monstrous system of the world. She was—to use Gerald Heard's word—"co-conscious" with all other parts of the human race. Man's inhumanity to man seemed to her a great deal more than that; it was

an inhumanity of one part of the same body to another. The Shanghai entrepreneurs who employed thousands of Chinese men, women, and children at starvation wages for twelve and fourteen hours a day were, to her, like the hands of a body cutting off its legs. Capitalism, imperialism, individualism, were more abhorrent than cannibalism, but had the same inner character. They differed from cannibalism in being more universal and more difficult to correct.

I had not her purity or courage, and could not feel these things with her clean, deep sureness. But I did feel them. As I have said, she had now reached her centre and was sure; I was only magnetised towards it. I was at once more complex and less integrated than she. Often my first feelings had to be chastened; hers were clear at once. Her individual impulses had been, by now, so subjugated and harmonised by her intelligence that the conflict was over: she was unified, integrated, and burned with a pure white flame. She was prepared for any sacrifice, up to and including death itself; petty questions (among which she included her personal destiny) could not disturb her any more. It was a marvellously pure flame, and even though I clearly could not hope to share its incandescence, it seemed to me that I must hover as near it as possible. Nothing else I had ever seen gave the same light and heat.

I decided to spend the winter in Moscow. The immediate problem was, of course, one of money: I had earned large sums and spent them in the past year, and the only way of getting through a winter in Moscow was to find editors or publishers who would pay for it. The matter was not easily arranged in Moscow itself, where cablegrams were expensive and letters slow. It was possible (if at all) by going to London.

IV

How can I characterise the clash of influences that filled every minute of the next three weeks in England? I was like a fish that had learned to walk on dry land for six months, and now was plunged back into the ocean again; I was like a valley farmer inured to life on the top of a mountain, only to be thrown back into his lush native field when he could no longer till it. I found all my English friends unchanged; the pleasures of the mind and body, the agreeable diversions and preoccupations of modern Western life in the cultured upper class, had not undergone the slightest modification in all this time. These people were so sure of themselves, so accustomed to viewing the spectacle of the world without a direct interest in it, that they could discuss even the terrible alternatives of revolution with cool intellectual curiosity, neither feeling nor attempting to feel the need to choose between them. England—in spite of the General Strike of the year before—seemed as far from a genuine revolutionary situation as ever. Revolution was a melodramatic word without significance in these green fields and spacious houses, where any subject could be discussed and all subjects were of equal interest.

The crippling thing—the really disastrous thing—was that my friends in England were more intelligent and better educated than myself. I might *feel* that I was right, that the moment in which we all lived presented a breathless intensity of meaning, that a decision was necessary if we were not to perish, but I could never *prove* it. They all knew too much for me, were too cool and logical and altogether superior to such alternatives. On one occasion I was so exasperated by a long argument in which I had been rather badly worsted that I took to baser weapons and pounded a friend of mine

(it was Raymond Mortimer) with my fists, shouting, "You damned intellectuals have no blood—no blood—no blood!" The outburst, however inevitable, was naturally taken by all present as proving the very thing I was most concerned to disprove: the illogical and emotional nature of the revolutionary thesis.

I seemed more than a little eccentric to my English acquaintances just then, for their intellectual frigidity only drove me by reaction into excesses of statement and feeling. For a good part of the time I must have behaved (by any bourgeois standard) insufferably badly. I remember once when I went so far that a glazed look came into every English eye in the neighbourhood. I was staying with the Nicolsons at Long Barn, and another of their guests was Mrs. Nicolson's cousin, Eddy Sackville-West, the heir of Knole. The devotion of all members of the Sackville family to that monumental house, which sits in the midst of its lovely park like a visible history of the race that made it, was as well known to me as to anybody present, but I forgot the fact when Harold Nicolson (prompted by his familiar imp), propounded this question:

"What would a revolutionary government, or a Soviet government, or a proletarian dictatorship, do with a house like Knole? Specifically let's take Knole, and leave the others out. What would a revolution do to it?"

The question seemed very interesting, and I answered it at length. The special value of Knole was architectural and historical, I said, and would be so recognised by any revolutionary government. It had no value as a health resort or home for workmen, for it was neither healthy nor properly arranged for such purposes; it would not, therefore, be converted to other uses, but would almost certainly become what it was, in fact, to-day—a museum of the history and

taste of the English aristocracy from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries. Such a museum would find its best guardians and interpreters in the people who knew it best—in fact, in Eddy Sackville-West and Vita Nicolson, who could usefully become its curators.

Only when this speech had come to an end did I observe the faces of the two "curators." Mrs. Nicolson recovered first, and joined in the sudden laugh that turned the subject off, but I thought for a moment that her cousin was going to have a *crise*. I knew him only slightly then, and ought to have refrained from disposing of his house (not to speak of his own future) so cavalierly; but I had got into the habit, in the past six or seven months, of stating any idea as clearly as I knew how, with no nonsense about good taste or the behaviour of "gentlemen." It seemed to me that the whole trouble with the upper classes, so far as I knew anything about them, was that they were afflicted by too much good taste and too many superstitions about being "ladies and gentlemen" to form a correct idea of the materials of life. My temper of mind was—after six months of China and a week in Moscow—so different from theirs that their conventions and training, which obviously helped to make their company agreeable, nevertheless aroused the instinct of rebellion.

V

The reason, of course, can be guessed by anybody who has endured to the present point in this story: it was a defence. I was angry and alarmed, on arriving in London, to discover that the old world of comfort, pleasure, taste, diversion, and amusement still powerfully appealed to me; that the misery of nine-tenths of the human race could seem dim and distant when considered from the midst of a well-supplied bourgeois dining-room; that the things a Bol-

shevik—a working Bolshevik, like Rayna or Borodin—had to give up were things I valued.

This material seductiveness of the bourgeois world was strengthened by an attack on the revolutionary idea itself: I was always having J. M. Keynes quoted at me, and being told that the waste of life and wealth (that is, productive machinery) incidental to revolutions was uneconomic. My English friends, who were not themselves doing a thing to bring about the social rearrangement, always assured me that the rearrangement would take place; only, they said, it would take place in an orderly, democratic fashion under the parliamentary tradition. They pointed to their advanced social legislation—unemployment insurance, death duties and income taxes scaled up to attack accumulations of capital, their pension system and the rest—as a proof of the capacity of a capitalist state to submit to orderly, progressive reformation. That these arrangements were, after all, at the mercy of political accident, and that the so-called "social legislation" of bourgeois governments could not possibly protect the workers against the results of such crises as war, overproduction, and speculation (the characteristic crises of capitalism according to the Marxist view), were objections ruled out by the Englishmen I knew with a succinct phrase: "You want too much." They believed in their own ability, or their race's ability, to achieve the desired ends by the methods of democracy, which, they believed, were "slow but sure." Little as I felt this to be the essential truth, I was for ever being worsted in argument—for ever being obliged to concede in my own mind, however strongly I protested, that there was a lot in what they said.

The sum of all my impressions on that visit to England would have meant nothing at all to Rayna or to Borodin. They were certain; their political philosophy never deserted

them; they knew the economic bases of English upper-class life too well ever to be charmed by its graces. But I was (intellectually at least) far from certain. The process by which my desire for integration had become involved with, and centred upon, Rayna Prohme was not a purely intellectual process, or it could never have been affected by any amount of bourgeois charm. I remained convinced that the issue of revolution was the only genuine issue (the only "live option," as William James would have said) in the world I lived in, but my own position with respect to the revolutionary struggle was more dubious and uncertain than ever.

The effect of England upon me, at a moment so critical, was like that of a brake applied to a wheel. It slowed me up, made me waver and ask questions. The questions England suggested were personal ones. They went something like this: Why should you, a bourgeois born and bred, leading an externally agreeable life under the bourgeois system of society, try to do anything to change it? What does it matter to you if Chinese coolies starve to death, if boys go into the coal mines of Lancashire at the age of twelve, if girls in Germany die by the hundred from tuberculosis and occupational diseases in the chemical factories? What do you care if the steel workers in Pennsylvania are maintained in conditions of life equivalent to slavery? Can't you forget about all that? You'll probably never starve; you can earn enough money with your silly little stories to lead a pleasant life; why not do so? You think revolution is inevitable,—or say you do,—why not, then, leave it to other people—workmen, soldiers, Bolsheviks? It's their business, not yours; what have you to do with it? Are you prepared to give up all the pleasures of modern Western culture, everything from good food to Bach and Stravinsky,

to work for the welfare of other people's grandchildren in a world you will never see?

The answer was, decidedly, no. That was what England had done for me in the short space of twenty-one days.

I went to Berlin at the end of October and stayed long enough to complete my arrangements for the winter in Moscow. I was as "revolutionary" in conversation as ever, but I knew that I did not possess the spirit of self-abnegation required to follow Rayna Prohme in the course that now lay before her. Her letters during October had shown an increasing determination in her purposes. She was on the point of entering the Communist Party—not lightly or fashionably, as young men do in Paris and London, but with the intention of sacrificing her entire personal existence to its service. The whole thing made me unimaginably gloomy, and I could not foresee even so far as a month ahead, but I did know one thing: that I must make the most valiant attempt to save her, as a person, from absorption into the machine of the Party or the Komintern. I no longer cared if this seemed the effort of a vulgar, selfish, lazy, and cowardly bourgeois, for England had persuaded me that I was not a Bolshevik and never could be one. The leopard cannot change his spots.

Harold Nicolson put me on the train in Berlin and Rayna met me at the station in Moscow. That was the kind of journey it was: not only a space-journey—not even primarily a space-journey, although the stations succeeded each other through Germany, Poland, and Russia with measured accuracy; it was an idea-journey, a trajectory between two worlds.

The train drew in to the October Station in Moscow before noon on November 7, and Rayna's fiery hair was the first thing I saw on the platform. I had been away from Moscow—far away from Moscow—for a good five weeks.

VI

Throughout that day and for the days that followed I was beset by indefinite and torturing premonitions. They were not correct,—what premonitions are?—but they were near enough to what did happen to assume—even at this distance in time—an awful significance. I engaged in a desperate struggle, from that first day onward, to keep Rayna from joining the Communist Party.

Of all the contradictions of the period, this was perhaps the worst. The pure flame that gave such light and heat—what was it? The centre toward which I was magnetised, the focus of the world as I saw it, was Rayna Prohme as revolutionary; it was not revolution alone and it was not Rayna Prohme alone, but Rayna Prohme integrated and set alight by her pure conviction. This was, in fact, my reason for being in Moscow. And yet from the moment I arrived I fought tooth and nail to get her away from her own essential centre—to recall her, by fair means or foul, to the half-world in which I wanted to keep on living.

When I use such strong words—" desperate " and " tooth and nail "—I mean everything they mean, and more. For six days and nights the struggle continued with hardly a respite. Her room was on the other side of my sitting-room, in the adjoining apartment, and when either of us thought of a new argument we kicked on the wall; in two minutes—the time required to take down the innumerable barricades of iron, wood, and steel put up by my timorous landlady—we had met and started all over again. We talked until four or five o'clock in the morning sometimes, and the argument was for ever renewed, never brought to an end. We neither of us got much sleep, but I was as strong as an ox and did not realise what

a terrible strain the whole thing was on her nervous system.

No matter how bitterly I may have regretted all this afterwards, it is the fact. When her physical fragility impressed me more than usual, I used it, too, as an argument. She had been having severe headaches for months, and they had lately grown more frequent; aspirin and phenacetin did not help them; sometimes in the midst of the argument a dazed stare would come into her eyes and she would say: "Wait a minute. I must just be quiet for a minute; it's the headache again." When it passed, I used to ask her how she proposed to endure the rigours of life as an active revolutionary when her physical resources were so limited. This particular argument had no immediate effect. She would laugh and say: "In or out of a revolution, I've got to die some time, and what does it matter?" Her disregard of her own personal destiny was so complete that nothing I could think of made an impression upon it. The arguments that did reach her were the general ones, those directed at the idea of revolution itself; and one of the most effective of these was the one I had suffered from in London—the opinions of J. M. Keynes as shown in his booklet about Russia. I telegraphed to London for that booklet, but it never arrived.

It would be foolish to maintain that there was nothing selfish and personal in all this. There was. I have said that in September I already felt that I could not live without the light and heat that came from this extraordinary flame. In September I had had no doubts; I would have followed her into the Lenin Institute, into the Communist Party, to Korea or Japan or anywhere. In October I had been forced to reconsider; I saw, too clearly, my own inadequacies for such a life. In November I was no longer willing to follow

her, even in mind, but struggled instead to bring her back from the certainty in which she dwelt to the easier world where men did not die for their beliefs—where they did not, in fact, have any beliefs if they could help it. This endeavour was selfish and personal, based, in the first instance, on a feeling that Rayna Prohme as a completed revolutionary instrument (in a year's time, let us say) would be a stranger to the lazy bourgeois I had recently rediscovered. She would be lost to me and to my world; in the sense of a bourgeois individuality she would be lost altogether, for her intentions were, even for a Communist, extreme.

She had decided to join the Party and enter the Lenin Institute to be trained as a revolutionary instrument. When she had completed her training she was to take service in one of the revolutionary organisations, probably in the Pacific Labour Bureau to begin with, perhaps afterwards in direct work for the Komintern. Her special qualification coincided with her own desire, and she would be sure to be sent to the Far East.

No decision in life could be more final. The vows of a nun, the oaths of matrimony, the resolutions of a soldier giving battle, had not the irrevocable character of this decision. Rayna was not taking it lightly; she had had four years of intimate acquaintance with revolutionary work, and knew what she was doing. Nothing I could bring up about the nature of the work or its effects made the slightest difference to her, for I found that she had considered it all before.

I was reduced, again and again, to the simplest forms of impotent argument—attacks upon the emotional nature of the revolutionary, attacks upon Rayna's personal structure.

"Of course the truth is," I would say, "that you derive a personal thrill out of the idea of being a revolutionary worker. It's sheer romanticism. Far more exciting than going home

to Chicago and listening to symphony concerts! That's the truth of it. Whether the idea of revolution is correct or not doesn't matter; you've got to have your thrill."

I never said a thing like this without realising at once how miserably specious and vulgar it was; but when I had exhausted all the legitimate arguments I could think of, wild stabs were the only form of attack left. Rayna, as it happened, understood the process too thoroughly to be disturbed by it: she knew that a remark of the kind was only a confession of weakness, of exhaustion, and, however weary she might be herself, she never failed to laugh. That laugh was generally accompanied by a polite admonition to use a little rudimentary intelligence, put into this form:

"Don't be a damned fool, Jimmy."

After seven crowded years this advice sounds as plain and recent as if it had been delivered ten minutes ago. I do not pretend to have acted upon it consistently or even most of the time, but at certain important moments, without preparation in thought or association of ideas, it has suddenly broken through every surrounding circumstance and rung again in my ears, tone and accent and laugh and all, like an actual voice.

VII

On Friday, November 11, we argued almost all night long. It was the last argument. At the end of it, when every element in the problem, personal and general, had been gone over a thousand times, and Rayna's resolution was still unshaken, we said good-bye—not too solemnly, of course; there was always some lightness in Rayna's spirit; she could always laugh, even though it was not altogether easy. It was the kind of good-bye I can scarcely explain unless it is instantly apparent. We were to meet again the next day, but in the essential sense it was good-bye just the same. She

was to go to the Lenin Institute on the following Monday, and I was going to leave Moscow as soon as I could bear to do so.

I asked her to do one trivial thing for me (I do not know what I hoped to prove by it). This was to dress on the following night in the golden dress from China that Soong Ching-ling had given her, to wear Bill's amber necklace, and to dine with me in the most flagrant luxury Moscow had to offer, at the Grand Hotel (Bolshaya Moskovskaya). This was before the Five-Year Plan, of course, and the Metropol had not yet become what, I believe, it was afterwards, a luxurious establishment for foreigners. Moscow's most bourgeois place just then was the old Grand Hotel, where most of the foreign visitors lived. Since my arrival in Moscow, throughout this week's argument, Rayna had worn the same dress—a wadded green silk dress in Chinese style, the warmest she possessed. We had taken our meals either at the cheap café underneath the Metropol or in workmen's co-operatives, where we could eat for very little, as neither of us had any money. I wanted one " bourgeois evening " for myself, for the sheer pleasure of it, and to see her once more in that gold dress; but it is possible that I also hoped (madness, of course) that silk and flowers, music and white wine from the south, might accomplish what I had failed to do, and bring her back a little way towards the world she had been born into and was now surrendering for ever.

" O.K.," said Rayna. " I'll freeze to death in that gold dress, I can tell you, but if I can borrow an overcoat and run like hell when we get out in the street, I'll do it. You shall have your bourgeois evening, but it won't make any difference."

On the next day (Saturday, November 12) she went to see Dorothy Thompson at the Bolshaya Moskovskaya and

fainted in Dorothy's room. This seemed a little alarming, but by that night it had been forgotten.

"I feel absolutely grand to-night," she said. "Silly of me to faint like that, but I do feel better now than I have for days. I think I'm going to enjoy the bourgeois evening."

She looked—as she said she felt—grand. She was only a thin slip of a girl, with no particular stature or figure or conventional beauty, but her appearance was at all times lighted up by her expressive eyes and the glory of her hair. The red-brown-gold of her short curls gave her the look of a lighted candle when she wore the gold dress from China. It was cut severe and straight, Manchu style, with a collar, and was made of very plain silk the colour of dull gold.

We went to the Bolshaya Moskovskaya and had our bourgeois evening. We even danced—twice. Dorothy Thompson came and sat with us and I told her what was happening. She seemed a little startled and incredulous.

"You understand what it is?" I said. "It's the end of Rayna Prohme. No more Rayna. Finished. Revolutionary Instrument Number 257,849."

The truth of what I was saying was too much to bear quietly just then, and I turned towards Rayna and pounded her thin shoulders in the Chinese dress.

"The end of Rayna Prohme," I said. "The end of Rayna Prohme."

She moved away, threw back her fiery head, and laughed.

"It's the end even of Revolutionary Instrument Number So-and-So," she said, "if you don't stop beating me. What do you think I'm made of, anyway?"

The dinner, the gold dress, the certainty of the decision, the gloom of Moscow, the Napareuli wine and vodka, all together had operated to destroy my common sense that night. Even when I was not saying it, I was thinking it,

and I said it often enough: " The end of Rayna Prohme." That night seemed as final as death itself.

VIII

I slept late the next day (Sunday, November 13), and walked slowly across to the Metropol in the afternoon to see if Rayna was there. (The Chinese Revolutionaries still had a small office there in which she worked when there was work to do.) As I came up the steps of the hotel, just where I had meet Rayna on that evening almost exactly two months before, I ran into the American correspondent, Anna Louise Strong, and a little Chinese Communist called Chang Ke. Rayna had saved Chang Ke's life in Peking in 1926 by concealing him in the basement of her house, and he was devoted to her.

" Mrs. Prohme is very ill," Chang Ke said in his flat, emotionless voice.

" She's at the Europe," Anna Louise said, " and apparently she's fainted. Chang Ke came to get me. We'll have to bring her back here and put her in my room for a while."

I went along with them to the Hotel de l'Europe, a small hotel about a square and a half away from the Metropol. Chang Ke led us up the stairs here to a small room, the ante-room to the part of the hotel occupied by the Chinese Labour Delegation. One or two Chinese were sitting there quietly, and Rayna was lying unconscious on a couch.

I picked her up and carried her downstairs and through the streets. She weighed nothing; it was like carrying a child. Once she recovered consciousness enough to speak, asked if she was heavy, and tried to stand up. The people in the streets stared a little and then hurried along on their way. We reached the Metropol quickly, and there Rayna

recovered enough to sit up in the lift and apologise for having fainted. But before we got to Anna Louise's room on the top floor she was gone again.

I was no good to Anna Louise in taking care of Rayna, and had nothing to do but walk about the town and wait for the doctor. Hours passed before the doctor came. Rayna had recovered consciousness, wholly or partly, and lay silent in the darkened room. Towards evening the "neighbourhood doctor," a weary Russian with two assistants and an incredible amount of paraphernalia, arrived and set to work. These gentlemen took possession of the room and started to unpack all their tubes and packs and appliances, which cluttered up the whole floor. I was asked to leave, and did not return for an hour.

By this time Rayna was sleeping fitfully, and I learned that she had been given ether—which, as by chance I happened to know, made her deathly sick. For the rest of that night she was alternately sick and delirious. I thought she should be taken at once to the Kremlin Hospital, and Anna Louise agreed with me, but nothing could be done without the Borodins, and I could not find them.

On the next day Moscow was covered deep in snow. It was bitter cold. I reached the Metropol in a state of unnameable terror, only to find Rayna quite rational and able to laugh again. She had passed a dreadful night and was very weak, but she blamed it on the ether. We moved her to a room of her own, and after Dr. Linck's visit she became cheerful again. (Dr. Linck was the German Embassy's doctor whom I had called in.) As she felt better the curtains were pulled back and the room grew light. Many people came to see her—Madame Sun Yat-sen, Borodin, Chang Ke, Scott Nearing, Lewis Fischer, and others. They spoke of plans, and what seemed to me the most hopeful thing of all—

the thing that might save everything from wreck—was a possibility of Madame Sun's going to the United States. If she did this she wanted Rayna to go with her, and for two or three days in the middle of that week, in spite of the steady gravity in Dr. Linck's eyes when I talked to him, I convinced myself that all the problems could be solved at last.

The week of November 13 was actually less difficult to get through than the previous week had been. Dr. Linck had forbidden political discussion of any kind in Rayna's room, and had made her promise that she would obey his orders. This ukase brought out the patient's laughter.

"Will you tell me," she said, poking at her pillows, "what on earth anybody 'd ever talk about in Moscow if political discussion was forbidden? What do you suppose we can talk about? I can't remember any other subjects!"

We found the other subjects readily enough, and throughout the week those conversations—never political—were, however difficult it may be to imagine it under the circumstances, a delight. We talked about everything under the sun except politics. She told me long stories about her childhood in Chicago and about her scapegrace younger brother whom she loved. I was never there in the mornings, and when I came in the afternoon she always had a budget of visits to tell me about.

I had never seen Rayna in better spirits than she was that Friday. We must have talked all afternoon and most of the night. Often I wanted to stop talking and let her rest, but she felt better than she had felt for a long time, and it amused her to lie there and recall a thousand stories of her early life, most of which were new and very funny to me. Her first

husband (the New York playwright, Raphaelson, known as "Raph") figured in these stories, as did her young brother and her sister Grace. They were all characters out of a past I did not know, the period before she had gone to China. In that whole day the word "revolution" was only mentioned once. That was when she suddenly recalled Eugene Chen's good-bye to her in Peking two years before. He had said at the door of their office, just as he was about to take wing for Canton:

"The Revolution is grateful," and then, magnificently, "The Kuomintang never forgets!"

We both laughed helplessly at this reminiscence.

She also talked a good deal about Bill Prohme, now thousands of miles away in Manila, to whom her affection and loyalty had been constant always. She even dictated a letter to him in which she said she was a little under the weather, but would be all right soon.

That night her illness took a turn for the worse, and although none of us yet knew what it was, its seriousness could no longer be concealed. She passed a bad night and was forbidden visitors in the morning. When I was left alone with her for the afternoon on Saturday she spoke to me in a very low voice. I had to lean over to hear what she said.

"The doctor thinks I am losing my mind," she said, "and that is the worst thing of all. He won't say so, but that is what he thinks. I can tell by the way he holds matches in front of my eyes and tests my responses. He doesn't think I can focus on anything."

She had spoken vaguely of this fear before, and all I could do was say that I did not believe it was well founded. But on the next day (Sunday, November 20) she felt certain that this was the case, and it kept her silent and almost afraid to

speak, even to me. I sat beside her hour after hour in the dark, silent room, and the blackness pressed down and in upon us. Two or three times she raised her voice to say, "Don't tell anybody." I knew that this meant her fear that her mind was attacked, and I promised not to tell. Later in the afternoon we talked a little, and she suddenly agreed with a proposal I had made some days before—that when she was able to travel she should go to Germany for treatment. Towards night she said: "I'll go to sleep for a while now, and when I wake up we can send a cablegram to Raph." I never heard her speak again.

Dr. Linck came in the evening and said that a professional nurse must be put on duty at once. The nurse came and sat. Sonya and Vep, two Russian friends who had helped care for her, remained for most of the night in the little ante-room, and Anna Louise returned too. The place was kept in complete darkness and silence. I was dazed with horror and felt absolutely nothing throughout the night. I came and went; walked in the Red Square; went to the Bolshaya Moskovskaya and drank vodka; returned to the Metropol from time to time to speak to Sonya. During the night Rayna woke up once and asked Sonya for me, but I was across the square. When I reached the room she was unconscious again. She had wanted me, I suppose, to send the cablegram.

On his last visit the doctor said: "The process I have foreseen has begun. It must take its course." Although I heard these words quite clearly, and they were translated to me by Anna Louise afterwards, they still did not carry their obvious meaning to my dazed intelligence. At three or four in the morning I went around the corner to the Savoy Hotel (where I had moved on the day after Rayna's illness began) and went to bed.

At seven o'clock that morning (it was Monday, November 21) the telephone in my room rang. Anna Louise's voice:

"You'd better come," it said. "Rayna is dead."

IX

Rayna Prohme died on Monday, November 21, 1927, and was cremated on the following Thursday, November 24. I left Moscow the day after the funeral and have not been there since.

An autopsy held on November 22 by a group of Moscow professors revealed something that did not surprise me: Rayna had died of encephalitis, inflammation of the brain. It must have begun many months before, and all through this time she had been exactly, literally, burning to ashes, just as the shell she had discarded was to be burned to ashes at the crematorium. No human being could so irresistibly suggest the quality of flame without being consumed for it.

On the afternoon of the funeral we all marched for hours across Moscow to the new crematorium. There were delegations of Chinese, Russian, and American Communists, many of whom had never known Rayna. It was very cold, and as I walked along I became conscious of the shivering, bent figure of Madame Sun Yat-sen. Her income from China had been cut off; she was too proud to accept the help of strangers; she had no winter clothing at all, and was walking through the dreary, frozen streets in a thin dark cloak. The motor-car lent her by the Soviet Foreign Office followed behind the procession; it was at least warm. I tried to persude her to get into it, but she would not. She walked every step of the way across the city, her lovely face bent down on her folded arms. She had only recovered from her own illness a few days before, and her pallor was

extreme. Even through the cold haze in which everything moved on that day I was aware that Soong Ching-ling was now the loneliest of exiles, shivering through the early dark behind the bier of her one wholly disinterested friend. The band played—out of tune—the revolutionary funeral march, alternating it with Chopin's. The maddening music, its lusty brasses a good half note off pitch, made the long procession hard to endure even for those who had never known Rayna.

Eventually—it was dark by now, and the great bells of the near-by convent were ringing for evening service—we came to the modern crematorium outside the city. It was brightly lighted, square and spare. The bier, draped in the Red flag and covered with golden flowers,—asters, chrysanthemums, all the flowers of Rayna's own colours, a heap of gold and red and brown,—was placed on the platform. There were speeches in Chinese, Russian, and English—revolutionary speeches. The English sounded just as meaningless as the Chinese or the Russian. Then a signal was given, a switch was turned, and the golden mass of Rayna, her hair and her bright flowers and the Red flag, sank slowly before us into the furnace.

That night Borodin came to see me. He looked colossal in my narrow room as he walked slowly up and down, speaking. I was on the bed and do not remember having said anything at all. He had come to say good-bye, he said, and to explain why he had not gone to the funeral. On principle he never went to funerals. The mind must be kept resolutely on its purposes.

His voice was deeply moved, and he controlled it with difficulty. He did not look at me, but walked from the window to the door and back again.

"I know what this is," he said. "I know exactly. But

what is needed is the long view. I have come here to ask you to take the long view—China, Russia. . . . A wonderful friend and a wonderful revolutionary instrument have disappeared together. But there is no use in anything unless we take the long view. Remember that. China, Russia. . . ."

After a few minutes he shook hands and went away. In the morning I took the train to Berlin.

EDOUARD A. AUJARD

Steam

A Short Sea Story

CAPTAIN HODGES spat over the side of the S.S. *Tuan Shan* as he noted the sluggish progress of his ship with a choleric eye. "We must have more steam or we're done. Can't you shake them yeller swine up? She's only creeping along."

Big Barnes, Chief Engineer, raised himself from the taffrail, where he had been gazing in a hopeless way at the rusted iron decks and white salt-encrusted masts—ghostly white masts of a ship which had almost ceased to be a ship. One blade was stripped from the propeller. For three weeks he had fought a losing game with the stokehold coolies. With food stores almost exhausted, he blamed the ship; not himself or the coolies. To him she was a coffin ship and a hag ship, slithering and wallowing through the storm just seven hundred miles from the nearest port.

"Can't you do anything?" the Captain repeated.

Barnes' mind came back to the Chinese firemen below. "They're starving," he said dejectedly. "What can I do?"

"We're all starving," complained the Captain fretfully, "and three knots an hour won't save us; we'll die like rats in a trap if we can't get six."

"I know," replied Barnes drearily. "I know." His eyes

wandered again to the white masts, as though they held him with a strange fascination.

The day drifted on. The engineer slouched off to his cabin and flung himself on a settee.

Night came, and the officers of the ship gathered in the mess-room for an evening meal—a spoonful of boiled corn and a small cube of dried American beef.

The meat was black and hard and offensive. It weighed exactly an ounce. For a week this same fare had been served, morning, noon and night. Sometimes it was eaten, but as often as not it was sent aft to the Chinese coolies.

The scanty fare was usually washed down with a mug of hot coffee without milk. After men have sat down to the same fare for a week, they become strangely silent. Their inward thoughts are reflected in their outward appearance. Their dress becomes careless and they cease to shave. They are as so many hopeless animals moving in a dreary circle.

It was so aboard the *Tuan Shan*. The little dark cubes of meat personified the soul of the ship. When they went, life would cease. Denver, the fourth engineer, was the only one who came to the table neatly dressed and shaved. He was very young, and clung to the custom as though it were a sacred rite.

"I knocked seven bells out of Ah Ming," Barnes was saying as Denver came in. "Somebody robbed me, so I got Ming."

Captain Hodges looked up, but made no remark.

"How do you know Ming did it?" asked Denver.

"I don't know," snapped Barnes, who didn't like his Fourth Engineer.

"Oh!" exclaimed Denver, returning to his plate with its little island of boiled corn and dark mahogany cube of meat. It was like taking medicine, only a little worse. In two

determined gulps, he swallowed the nauseous concoction. It was over, an offensive but necessary task. Hurriedly he washed the remnants down with a cup of hot coffee.

Each man swallowed his meal in the same get-it-over manner. Then silence fell on the mess. Barnes was plainly in an irritable mood.

Denver's eyes went to the big mirror in the sideboard. In the half-light of the glass, he saw the mess boy, Ah Ming, glide in and out with the coffee. Ah Ming made no sound in his movements. His silence was his chief quality.

His contused lip and swollen left eye showed plainly the result of Barnes' seven bells punishment. Beyond the battered appearance of his face, Denver noticed something else about the mess boy.

" What did you lose ? " he fired the question at the Chief Engineer.

" What's that to do with you ? " retorted Barnes heatedly.

Unperturbed, Denver stood up. " Watch for a moment, and I'll show you something," he said. Stooping over, he rang the table bell. Ah Ming glided in like a cat. Denver gave the order to clear the table. As Ah Ming bent over to gather the plates, the Fourth made a rapid pass to the mess boy's belt. The next moment he threw a long curved knife and a small dirk on the table.

" What name that feller ? " he demanded, swinging the coolie round.

" Peelem potato," defended Ah Ming. " Good feller, savvy quick time. Can do."

" No can do," denied Denver, " potato finish."

Barnes sprang across the table and knocked the coolie down. " You yellow ——, I'll teach you."

" That's a silly thing to do," remarked the Fourth. " You're only making matters worse." Having fired this parting

shot, he walked out of the mess. The Second Mate followed.

"Things are only middlin'," said the Second. "The old man's to blame in a way. He should never have left port without a dry docking. Here we are a hundred miles off our course, no tucker, and a crew of coolies running amok. It can't last—it can't last."

"No, it can't last," repeated Denver. "Something will happen to-morrow. They'll wait till then, and when they come, they'll come with a rush. Barnes was too brutal to-night."

"His nerves are gone," commented the Second. "I'm on edge myself. I wish I knew what's coming to us."

At breakfast they met again. The same dreary, hopeless meal. It was over in a couple of minutes. More like a drill manœuvre than a meal. Everyone sensed a climax. Captain Hodges and Barnes had been at it half an hour that morning.

Steam, steam, steam and more steam! That was the burden of the verbal battle. "I must have it," concluded the Captain. "It's your life as well as mine."

Barnes was driven into a corner. He was asked to produce something beyond his weakened powers. He was, however, determined to make some show to demonstrate to the Captain the hopelessness of the position. He turned to Denver.

"What's wrong with your watch, Mr. Denver? The steam simply fades away when you're below. You'll have to stiffen up them coolies. Get into 'em with your fists, man," he urged with some show of strength. "Make 'em jump."

Denver knew the steam was lower on his watch than on the other two. Of the three watches his lot of coolies were the worst. They were lazy and truculent.

"Stiffen 'em," he repeated pensively, visioning his queer

assortment of Chinese. "Get into 'em with my fists, eh? Would you?" He looked across at Barnes quizzically.

"It's not my job," answered Barnes airily.

Denver smiled and whispered something to the Second Mate, who was sitting next to him. The Second shrugged his shoulders.

"What's that?" snapped Barnes, jumping to his feet.

"Smoke," replied Denver, as he eyed the curl drifting up from his cigarette. "Just smoke, chief."

"All right," retorted Barnes. "If you can't take a hint, have it the other way. You'll lambast those yellow —— or I'll lambast you. I'm chief here, an' this ship's got to steam an' not slop along like a——"

"The coffin ship that she is," finished Denver.

The Captain made an involuntary movement, but did not speak. Captains don't like to hear their ships maligned, and Hodges was not an exception. But the fight for steam was on, and he did not intend to interfere. The atmosphere was already sufficiently electrical.

"Look here!" urged Barnes.

"Cut out the lambast," threw in Denver.

"Are you going to obey orders?"

"Not those orders."

"You'll have to get more steam, Mr. Barnes," said the Captain with an air of finality, as he rose from his chair. "I don't care how you get it, but we must have it."

"You heard that," insisted Barnes.

"It's my watch," replied Denver, rising. "If the steam doesn't go up, you can come down and do your own lambasting."

When Denver had gone below, Barnes went to his cabin, where he could watch the small steam gauge fixed above his bunk. Fervently he hoped that it would go up. For twenty

minutes he watched it slowly drop point by point. With a muttered curse he jumped from the settee. He then locked the door. Having thus protected himself from prying eyes, he fished out a bottle of whisky from the bottom of his chest. Three stiff tots he threw off in rapid succession. He next loaded a French automatic and jammed it into his pocket.

"I'll make them yellow swine dance," he fumed as he climbed down the engine-room steps. "I'll shake that Fourth up too." The whisky braced him for the job.

"Mr. Denver," he bawled as he reached the upper engine-room grating, that little iron balcony which is usually a dozen feet above the floor plates. "Mr. Denver, where'n hell's yer steam? What's the matter with yer steam? D'yer think I'm going to stand fer this? Are you in charge of the watch or them yeller ——"

The engines groaned and wheezed and the pumps moaned wearily. The huge piston-rods rose and fell as if each stroke would be the last. Now and then, the spray from a sea would fall in a shower on the hatchway above, and some stray splashes hissed on the hot cylinder tops. From outside came the woosh of the storm, the sound of tumultuous waters surging about the ship.

The Chief Engineer stood on the upper grating, glowering down at the Fourth. "Are you in charge of the watch?" he repeated threateningly.

Revolt was in charge as far as Denver was concerned. He had just had a go at the coolies, and failed to budge them an inch. "We're all in charge," he replied warmly. "Every man-jack aboard this ship's a captain, every coolie's a captain. Go and tell them you want more steam. See what they say. Watch what they do. Everyone has a knife. They didn't have knives when we started, but they've got them now. If

you want more steam, you'll have to get over a gun. I've tried, and I know."

He gave his answer with boyish indignation. He knew Barnes was a bully, but he did not know that Barnes was a brave bully.

Barnes swung down the steps in three movements, a kind of hop, step and a jump directed with his hands on the iron rails. "All right," he roared. "I'll show you." Snatching up a spanner, he made for the stokehold door."

Denver watched from the engine-room.

Without uttering a word of warning, the big Chief went for the coolies with both feet and the spanner. In his left hand he held the French automatic—a glittering ominous fistful of blue steel.

"Jump, you ——, jump!" he shouted, driving right and left with the spanner and kicking all before him with his great boots. "Jump!"

The watch jumped. Every coolie grabbed a shovel.

"Give her the blood! Steam her! Fire up! Slice! Put her on the blood!" yelled this whirlwind of fury—big Barnes, Chief Engineer of the *Tuan Shan*.

Slowly, inch by inch the indicator crept up to that blowing-off red line that engineers call the blood.

The *Tuan Shan* sloshed from three knots into six in a few strenuous fighting minutes. Once again Barnes was big Barnesie, Chief Engineer of "the wickedest coffin ship that was ever allowed to put to sea."

"I'm chief of this —— hooker," he shouted to Denver in the moment of victory. "I've got the steam and I'll hold it for the watch."

"Now for the knives," he ripped out. "Gimme their knives." They advanced in a body to surrender their weapons.

" Stand back," ordered the Chief. " One at a time, my yellow plums." He poked the pistol into their noses. " It's chock-full of lead," he warned. " One at a time. Savvy ? "

They savvied, and came one at a time like vanquished soldiers to lay their arms at the feet of the conqueror. Barnes smiled down on the little gleaming heap of knives and dirks.

" Mr. Denver," he called, " take their teeth away."

A coolie made a desperate dive for the engine-room door.

" Come back, you swine," Barnes commanded, seizing the boy by his neck sweat-rag.

" No can do," whined the fireman.

" Can do," countered the Chief's brass voice as he hurled the coolie across the stokehold plates.

The ship lurched drunkenly, pitching the stokehold almost to an angle of forty-five degrees. Coal skids, shovels, and slice-bars slithered in a terrific din to the port side of the boilers. Two boys went down with the wreckage. From above came the voice of the gale and the sound of seas breaking over the deck.

" Shut the door," Barnes roared to Denver above the noise, " or some of the ——'ll get away. I want 'em all. They're going to steam her or die."

Denver protested. " Don't you think I'd better keep a watch too ? " he advised in a shout to Barnes' ear.

" No, I've got 'em where I want 'em, an' I can hold 'em there. Shut the door."

The Fourth drew the iron bar across the slide, and Barnes settled down to knock seven bells out of the watch.

The minutes passed into hours, with the steam always close to the line. The engines and pumps pounded out their steel medley of work. Outside the storm kept up its long, wailing, ceaseless hum.

Eight bells of the forenoon watch struck. The Second Engineer came down to relieve the Fourth. "You're a brick, old man," he said.

"It wasn't me," explained Denver. "The Chief did it. He's in there now."

"In with the coolies? Alone?"

"Yes."

The Second did not wait for more. Frantically he threw the stokehold open.

His fears were groundless. Like a begrimed graven image Barnes was sitting on top of the boiler feed pump with his eyes on the coolies below. They leapt to his glance and toiled to his threat. He was a true high priest in his temple of the steam god. He kept their knees and backs bent and their bodies a-sweat.

"Gimme the next watch," he said, "I'll put 'em through."

So the forenoon watch limped out, bruised, beaten and bandaged, and the afternoon watch sulked in.

Then they too awoke to the change in the stokehold. There was a dancing devil among them with a spanner, a gun and a pair of boots.

"Lift her up. Steam her. Blood her!" yelled the devil.

They lifted her; they blooded her; they jumped.

At the end of the watch they staggered out, a crippled company of coolies with a dot-and-carry-one limp.

"Gimme the next," repeated Barnes. "They're learning well."

Then the third watch danced to the spanner, the boot and the threatening glint of blue steel. And the *Tuan Shan* steamed under a smoking smother of spray with her wheezing, stuttering engines and groaning pumps—creaking and straining in every ancient rusty rib.

Barnes was at last relieved by the Second Engineer, and

the ship still steamed under a drive of curses and threats. Day followed day until the fourth, when Barnes fell asleep on top of the feed pump. It was toward the end of the morning watch (8 a.m.) and the coolies seized the opportunity to scramble in a body to the deck. They had had enough.

On the for'ard deck, just above the well deck, they gathered to discuss their plan of mutiny. Up and down the scale they ran in their chattering sing-song of defiance.

From another case of the ship's cargo they had obtained a second supply of knives. But they had chosen a strange place to make their last stand against authority. Although the storm had abated, stray feathers of spray still drove across the decks.

They were ill-clad; some with a pair of knickers and a cotton singlet; others with naught but a loin cloth. The wind was biting cold.

Muffled up in oil coats and rubber boots, the officers summed up the position from the bridge. West eyed East and East eyed West.

Captain Hodges descended to the well deck to discuss the matter.

" No can do," they shrilled.

He approached a little nearer, and they replied with a shower of knives. He retired to the bridge thinking hard.

The West began to think while the East waited.

" They'll die if we leave 'em there," said the Captain to the bosun. " Put her nose into the next big 'un and we'll get 'em that way."

So the bosun waited for the next lopping wall of sea, and then slapped the nose of the *Tuan Shan* clean up under it.

A cry of dismay went up from the coolies. They hung on while the sea surged over them. Two tumbled and rolled

along the well deck in the swirl of the waters. They were grabbed by the Second Mate and disarmed. Down to Barnes they went—two shivering waifs of hungry revolt.

When the next coolie was washed from his perch, a volley of knives greeted the First Mate as he snatched the fireman from the maw of the sea. He went below with his brother rebels. Three knives stuck quivering in the mast.

" Number three boy," said Barnes. " Jump."

So the morning passed with the bosun washing the rebels back to work. He enjoyed it. Before the watch was over he boasted he could pick any man he wished, plonk him with a wave and land him like a wriggling fish, right slap bang into the Second Mate's arms.

He did the job neatly in four motions. There was the swing of the wheel, then the clout of the sea against the bow, the upward shoot of the wave, and the downward sweep of the sea on the coolies.

" Flip," said the bosun as he picked his man off. " Flip."

Yellow bundle after yellow bundle fell before his unerring wheelcraft. At last the three watches were back in the stokehold.

" Shut the door," said Barnes. He was very weak, but he summoned all his will-power for the final fight. If he was a devil before, he was a hundred demons now. Dividing them into three watches, he drove them to a stagger.

As its turn expired each watch fell in a limp bundle in the corner of the stokehold. Poor queer little heaps they made in the fierce glow of the furnace fires.

But the *Tuan Shan* steamed . . .

The hand that flayed them fed them. There were no intervals in the fo'c'stle now. Ah Ming brought the food down three times a day.

Then the end came. Barnes was missing from his throne on the boiler feed pump.

" Where's Mister Barnes ? " asked the Second Engineer, who had opened the door from the engine-room.

The Chinese pointed to the iron ladder leading up the funnel. " He go up," they muttered, staring at the funnel as if they could see Barnes going up.

" P'raps he's on deck," said the Second to Denver. " Slip up and see."

Denver searched the deck and the Chief's cabin. Then he gave the alarm. The ship was combed fore and aft. Barnes had disappeared. The fact shocked the ship with its grim challenge. But time passed and the fight continued and the *Tuan Shan* steamed.

One day, after several eternities of toil and starvation, the battered ship limped into port with her flag half-mast—a derelict study of red rust and white wind-dried salt.

In addition to Barnes, six coolies were missing. Rather than continue the struggle, they had taken the short cut over the side to eternity.

Life swung back to normal and the disappearance of Barnes.

" There's sure to be an inquiry," said the Captain. " An' all kinds of awkward questions." He hated inquiries and land-lubbing courts.

" You know what happened ? " queried the Second Mate.

" Yes, yes, yes," answered the Captain. " But I want to forget it," he added jerkily, rising to leave the mess, lest he should be asked to give more details.

It was the bosun who told the story of the disappearance of Barnes to a naval stoker in a pub ashore that night. " She was a little bit uv old hell orlright," he said after the third beer.

" Yep," encouraged the stoker. " Go on."

" There I was a standin' on the bridge with a cup o' corfee for the ole man," continued the bosun. " ' Cup o' corfee, sir,' ses I. I mighter bin torkin' to the wind fer all the notice he took uv me. There he was a cranin' his neck an' sniffin' 'ard like a giraffe, an' lookin' white as if he seed a ghost or somethin'."

" ' Did yer smell anythin', Bosun ? ' ses he ter me, kinder worried like. I takes a sniff or two and smells somethin' like burnin' leather.

" ' Somethin' like ole boots,' ses I, puzzled over his frightened look.

" ' That's it,' he ses. ' Ole boots,' kinder thoughtful.

" ' Beggin' yer pardin, sir,' ses I. ' Yer corfee's gettin' cold.'

" But he takes no notice uv me for a long time. At larst he turns round and ses, ' Yer see that smoke comin' outer the funnel.'

" An' I nods simple-like, not understandin' the drift uv his thoughts, or his queer looks an' that.

" Then, lookin' up at the smoke, the Capt'n mutters some kind uv a prayer, an' ses ' Amen ' at the end. An' that's the larst uv the engineer."

The bosun cupped his hands to light his pipe.

" An' I'm a bit uv a liar meself," said the stoker.

A. E. MACKAY

"Men of Good Will"

Since the middle of last century the French novel has followed two main and quite distinct tendencies: that which dealt subjectively with the individual; and that which gave an objective and collective interpretation of contemporary life. The former school may be said to have originated with Rousseau, and to have reached its fullest development in the genius of Proust, while the objective movement found its greatest exponent in the master mind of Balzac. Indeed, in his great series of novels, "The Human Comedy," Balzac did for the citizens of Paris very much what Shakespeare had done for kings and courtiers. And now, directly in this tradition, we have the ultimate expression of the social or group novel in Jules Romains' *Men of Good Will*, which is intended to cover the period from 1908 to the present day, and of which the first six volumes have appeared.

Throughout the nineteenth century the "social" or collective novel gradually developed. There were the *Mystères de Paris* and the *Mystères du Peuple* of Eugène Sue, which covered large areas and ran into many volumes. Then in the nineties Maurice Barrès published the first modern "group" novel, *Les Déracinés*, which described the adventures

of a band of students, and in which not love but social problems were the central themes. This was followed some ten years later by André Gide's *Faux Monnayeurs*, depicting a group of young men and their reactions to life. And at the present time Roger Martin du Gard in *Les Thibaud* follows the fortunes of two families in a series of volumes.

But though collectivism has become the fashion in French fiction, no other living author has attempted anything on such a large scale as *Men of Good Will*, perhaps because no other writer has been inspired by the philosophical idea of "unanimism"—a particular conception of Collectivism, which Jules Romains has evolved from his own communion with the spiritual and corporal life around him.

Jules Romains (Louis Farigoule) was born in August 1885, in the hamlet of Saint-Julien Chapteuil in the commune of Valey. In this austere and mountainous country his family had lived for generations—a strong and pure peasant race. When Louis Farigoule was three years old, his father was appointed to teach in a school in Montmartre, and it was from this picturesque district that the child started his explorations of Paris, which were to make such a deep impression on his receptive mind.

Educated at the Lycée Condorcet and the École Normale, while still at college Jules Romains had collaborated in the Symbolist review *La Plume*, and his first volume of poems *L'Ame des Hommes* won the annual prize of the Society of French Poets in 1904. About this time he met Gustave Kahn, who introduced him to Charles Vildrac, René Arcos and Georges Duhamel—the founders of the association known as "l'Abbaye." This was a group of writers and artists, who, installing themselves in an old house at Creteil, proceeded to print their own books on a Minerva pedal-press, and for two years produced excellent work. Though not

actually one of this artistic fraternity, Jules Romains was closely associated with it, and his second volume of poetry was printed at the Abbaye in 1908.

This little book is interesting as being the first expression of Romains' theory of "unanimism," which has played such an important part in his work. He has told us very simply how "unanimism" came to be born in his mind. The drama of his childhood had been a religious crisis, made more acute by the daily scenes of Paris with its thousand possibilities of exaltation, suffering and despair. One day while walking up the Rue Amsterdam, he suddenly felt all those intimate heart-searchings were calmed, and outer conflicts resolved into one harmony, and he became aware of the evident presence of a single "unanimous" spirit encircling and informing the houses, the passers-by and himself. Thus "unanimism" grew out of an actual experience, although later, when Romains became professor of philosophy, it developed into a metaphysical hypothesis.

It would be out of place to discuss here the actual philosophical value of this theory which Romains has worked into something resembling a method in his *Manuel de Deification*, and which, briefly, implies two postulates or articles of faith. First that there exists a certain natural spiritual reality, the unanimous; secondly that the individual human mind is capable of entering into a direct, immediate and intuitive communication with this reality; further, that each group of individuals is in itself a "unanimism" which in turn can communicate with the "unanimous." These ideas have been enlarged by the sociologist Durkhiem, and are easily linked up with contemporary spiritual beliefs. And for the matter of that, the main hypothesis on which "unanimism" rests is as old as Plato. But what is remarkable is that, in Romains' case, this theory has absolutely governed all his work, and

has led him to experiments in expansion of form which in the grandeur of their conception have surpassed all contemporary fiction. These experiments reach their fullest development in *Men of Good Will*, which will live as a masterpiece long after the theories which inspired it are laid aside.

How far the " group " itself may be considered as a spiritual entity is a question which has long teased the mind of man, and has led to various interpretations throughout the ages, from the early pagan " mysteries " to the quaint conclusions of mediæval legists. And here we may note how Romains' training as a man of science and a professor of philosophy has stimulated his imagination, and how it fulfils the requirements which Aldous Huxley has foretold to be necessary for the writer of the future.

Certainly the idea of unanimism or collectivism is the dominant motive of all Jules Romains' works. It appears in different forms in all his early prose, notably in *Le Bourg Regéneré* (1906), *Puissances de Paris* (1911), *The Death of a Nobody* (translated 1913), *Les Copains* (1913), *Le Dieu des Corps* (1928); and in his poetry it takes the form of poetic mysticism. But in *Men of Good Will* Romains transcends his theories. In this vast symphony of life, he has, as it were, assimilated unanimism which has become one of the natural elements in his vision. Thus it does not in the least distort reality, but serves to show the ties which attach humanity to the universal, and in so doing approaches wider truths.

In his introduction to *Men of Good Will* Romains says: " There has not been one earlier work of mine, since 1905, which has not embodied my present means of expressing collective life." Thus the scheme of this novel took shape in his mind. " The more responsive I became to the reality of modern life," he tells us, " the more I felt that I wanted to interpret it without having to resort to an out-of-date pro-

cedure which distorted it." In short, the painting of such a wide collectivism demanded a new perspective.

Hitherto when a novelist proposed to portray the world of his time tradition offered him three different methods. Either to write a series of novels depending on one central figure, as in *Les Misérables* of Hugo, or Galsworthy's *Forsyte Saga*, or Romain Rolland's *Jean Christophe*; or to depend upon the relationship of a family with other families, which may portray several generations, as in Zola's *Rougon-Macquart*: or else to recall events described in other novels—the method of Balzac in his *Comédie Humaine*.

But for Romains' purpose, which is to represent reality—the reality of the twentieth century—he found traditional methods inadequate and even a little absurd, and he had to evolve a new form. Having introduced numerous groups of people he recounts their different stories side by side, time, environment and place being the common factors in their destinies. And in such a scheme he has scope to indicate what men owe to the events of their epoch. Moreover in this intricate plan he mixes real and imaginary incidents, showing their consequences on different groups, the actions and reactions and the chances and mischances involved. For *Men of Good Will* is not so much the history of individuals as the portrait of a city, the picture of an age.

This plan is revealed to us in *The Sixth of October* (Vol. I), which depicts a single day in Paris in the year 1908. The book opens with a general view of Parisian life. The town awakes. The sky is of " that powder-grey " which seems to belong to summer rather than autumn. The courtyards of houses " sing with light." Paris lies in folds on each side of her river. Everywhere people are going to work, " myriads of humanity slide down towards the centre." They have preoccupations and anxieties in common: the events an-

nounced in the daily papers. Wright has broken the record of long-distance flight; Jaurès has published an article; war is threatened between Turkey and Bulgaria. Middle-aged men are more interested in the report of the first session of the General Workers Federation at Marseilles. Correct gentlemen and thrifty clerks read with distress of panic on the Bourse.

Amid this panorama, which is drawn with amazing vitality and breadth, we are introduced to different groups, and individuals who will play their part in the scheme of the whole. Painters are seen at work, young Wazemmes the apprentice is grinding colours. The actress Germaine Baader wakes. As the morning wears on we see into the households and hearts of the worldly de Champcenais, and the de Saint-Papouls. We meet the young schoolmaster Clanricard saddened by thoughts of war, while the Deputy Gurau considers events nearer home, namely, the scandal of the oil interests' revenue frauds in the Chamber. Here too is the leader Sampeyre distressed by the European situation, asking himself whether rulers and diplomats, "in the course of playing their little specialist games do not succeed in setting really big events in motion." Thus we see, through the eyes of the more thoughtful citizens, the political situation which nearly brought the world war six years ahead of its time.

The groups are chosen from the most varied circles: working painters, politicians, teachers, business men; aristocratic families, the rich middle classes. In each group are echoes of the same preoccupations, the events of the day. But above all, their thoughts and worries are purely personal: the binding to be chosen for a book, the price of sugar stocks, the charms of a mistress, results on the race-course. Turn by turn each of the characters holds our attention. We become engrossed in their personal dramas, so clearly are they made to live before us, so memorably are they described;

whether it is the timid Juliette hiding her love-letters from her husband, or again the deputy Gurau with his mistress, remembering the windows in Notre Dame " nocturnal chants of precious stones."

And all the time Paris is the central figure, breathing, watchful, alive! Enfolding the lustful and the meek, the rich and poor. The background to the silent faces of a crowd of strikers in whose eyes " no action was impossible." And here two forces are compared, the people and the army.

But there is a lighter and happier aspect of Paris as the playground of Louis Bastide and his hoop. Rarely has the mind of a child been drawn with more tender understanding unmarred by sentimentality. Here is Montmartre as Romains must have seen and loved it in childhood, with its long, quiet streets full of mute benevolence, and the sky that seemed to bend down over the roofs and sheds or spread away beyond the smoke, and which seemed to contain " all kinds of promises which the heart of a child of Paris could divine." As the boy carefully manœuvres his hoop up the heights the very noise of Paris passes into his body, though he is not aware of listening to it. Trains whistle from the suburbs in the plains, and he recognises their cries " without noticing them, as though he had been born among sea birds."

As the evening draws in we see Paris in the October twilight, with her trains converging from distant provinces. Gradually mass movements begin, those long ascensions towards the north and towards the east " like an interminable drawing of breath." Activity has deserted the interiors of the Bourse, banks and offices to increase and thicken in the streets. The weariness of five o'clock " makes itself suddenly felt by thousands upon thousands of men," while Paris lies under the evening light, " opened out like a hand bearing the marks of mysterious powers, criss-crossed with contrary influences,

furrowed with secret lines," the lines of wealth, of poverty, of business and of love.

And again we mingle with the crowd and meet the same characters with their hopes and fears, lusts and dislikes; and overhear the apprentice Wazemmes justifying his sordid love-affair—" the things that happen mean nothing in themselves, everything depends on the ideas we form from them " —and concluding, as he passes under the viaduct of the Metro, that to make the best of all things he needs a soul more spacious than his own !

On this note ends the first book—the symphonic overture—of *Men of Good Will.* But perhaps the most powerful portrait in it is that of Quinette the book-binder, whose adventures hold the chief place in the second volume. Here is a man whose type we must all recognise, whose character is so precisely yet delicately drawn that we ourselves seem to live through his experiences as we read, and who has certainly never before been depicted in fiction. The curiosity and secret vanity of this assassin immerse him with every appearance of reality in his uncalled-for crime. Methodical, imaginative, he loves mystery and danger, and plays with fear as a child plays with fire. He is a real story-teller, living his romances instead of writing them. There is perfect harmony between his inner life and its outer manifestations. He is, indeed, an authentic creation.

Other characters hold us with scarcely less interest. There are the students Jallez and Jerphanion, revealing, as we may guess, two aspects of Romains' own youth. *Childhood's Loves* (Vol. III) opens with Jerphanion looking at Paris from the college roof, while he reflects that the rôle of a great man in society might be merely to precipitate events and transform existing situations. For this young man, born among the mountains, son of a village schoolmaster, " reality seems

full of oracles." The young Parisian Pierre Jallez is also an important figure, and his reflections express some of the author's most profound ideas. These two friends discuss Baudelaire and their reactions to his poetry, and from those considerations, in the course of their walks through Paris, Jallez goes on to tell Jerphanion of his childhood's love for Hélène. There is subtle sweetness and wisdom in the treatment of this childish idyll which describes the two children's rambles in Paris, with their language of signs and their feeling of security in crowded thoroughfares.

Then we see Jerphanion making his entré as tutor into " the old city of wealth." And the financial status of the de Saint-Papouls; the de Champcenais, and the oil magnate Sammécaud's dealings, are described with a Balzacian delight in detail. There are subtle touches of comedy, when at a dinner party at the de Champcenais', we meet the third-rate novelist Allory, whose characters " touched life only with the tips of their fingers and the points of their toes "; and a certain colonel who shyly puts forward an intelligent point of view about European affairs, but expounds with loud-voiced authority absurd military theories. There is humour, too, in the discussion between coachmen and chauffeurs, and in the solitary walks abroad of the dog Macaire.

Through the eyes of the deputy Gurau we catch a glimpse of the political world of Paris. Gurau's dealings with the capitalists, whose vested interests he feels it his duty to attack, and his struggles to combine honesty and singleness of purpose with a successful political career, are vividly recounted. In the cold hour of dawn—a tragic hour for many men—he reasons and argues with his conscience, going back over his past life, seeing himself as a failure, afraid; aware that he is playing into the hands of his enemies, yet too weak to withstand the lure of financial security, which under the

most unworldly pretext they have been clever enough to offer him. Gradually his meditation brightens, and he decides to talk to his old friend Jaurès. There is something extremely human in this need of the approval of the man he admires and respects. This is truly a powerful study of a politician's mind, shown quite dispassionately against a corrupt political background. The magnetic personality of Jaurès is also seen in relief against such a background, while he talks of revolution, forgetting his friend's smaller preoccupations.

In sharp contrast to the dream-like Baudelairean Paris of Jallez and Jerphanion, we have, in *Eros in Paris* (Vol. IV), that of Havercamp, a bookmaker who turns land agent, a business man with vision to attack and solve the problems which his environment has set for him. The whole system that Havercamp invents and perfects to facilitate the buying and selling of land is described in the minutest detail. We also see him eating beef steak, nor are we spared the unromantic scene of his brutal love-making. But though we may dislike his vulgar self-assurance, his too easy optimism, we must admire the energy which he brings to the fulfilment of his schemes. And indeed we follow with profound interest his project for building a new health resort.

In this volume we make the acquaintance of the German socialist Michels, who reflects the attitude of his country towards the international socialist question. Through the intrigues of Quinette, who has turned informer to the police, an Anarchist meeting is described, followed by a moving discussion between young socialists on how to avert war. And on Christmas eve Jallez and Jerphanion go to the Closerie des Lilas, where they see the poets Jean Moréas and Paul Fort, and Jules Romains sitting alone in a corner.

The first four volumes have covered a period of three

months, and are, the author tells us, designed to form the first section of the novel. "The object of this first part," he says, "has been to put the reader in the widest possible contact with the period which serves us as a threshold." And now, without in the least losing a comprehensive view of things, "we attach ourselves more closely to certain series of events."

Thus in *The Proud of Heart* (Vol. V) we follow closely the love-affair between Sammécaud and Marie de Champcenais. This has nothing of the usual banality of such society intrigues in fiction, it is an excellent psychological study. The character of Marie is drawn with delicate perception and understanding; she is a type—familiar enough in life—who has never before been thus honestly portrayed. Moreover, in her personal intercourse with the poor of Paris as a consequence of her love affair, she serves as a connecting link between the proud and the humble, who in this and the following volume are shown in direct antithesis. When Marie confides to her lover the secret of her backward son, Sammécaud advises her to send him to England, where he may be brought up as an athletic Englishman since he cannot become an intelligent Frenchman. This advice brings them both to London, which is amusingly seen through their eyes. Throughout this volume the absorbing intrigues of Quinette with the police are pursued.

In *The Humble* (Vol. VI), which forms the counterpart to *The Proud of Heart*, we follow the fortunes of Louis Bastide, whose childish dreams exist side by side with a precocious sense of responsibility. And here the Abbé Jeanne is introduced, meditating upon society, life and love, and doing acts of kindness to the poor. For him society is divided into the proud of heart and the meek, for he has behind his orthodox Catholicism a secret philosophy of life. He has also wide humanity and a pure conscience, and is one of Romains' finest portraits.

And now the really poverty stricken of a slum district are shown at close quarters, through the eyes of Jerphanion. This part of the work seems to invite comparison with Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*—that masterpiece of eloquent pity which did so much to improve conditions for French convicts. Indeed, it seems as if Romains were making this comparison when he puts considerations of the part pity must play in the understanding of extreme poverty into the mouth of Jerphanion. "None of your pity," he says; "pity's a scent sachet that serves to stop your nose. . . . The remedy can't be applied except by Society as a whole. . . . It's got to be a state operation." So Jerphanion turns socialist.

Such are the first six volumes of *Men of Good Will*, and they are magnificent, deserving of the enthusiasm with which they have been welcomed by critics all over the world. There can be no doubt that Romains' great experiment is fully justified, for our interest grows from book to book, with such consummate skill, such breadth of vision, yet with such exact and memorable detail, are the characters drawn. As the work proceeds we see the different groups and individuals now linked together, now falling apart, and by the sixth volume we can visualise the perfection of the whole design, which will take several more books to be completed. Moreover almost all the characters are *Men of Good Will*. None of them are entirely wicked or mad, though sometimes cruel or stupid. In some degree most of them bear the mark of their author's intelligence, for, like Shakespeare, Romains puts his own poetry into prosaic mouths.

And above all the book is an epic of Paris, with her monuments and ramparts, her grandeur and squalor; with her life like a tide now flowing to her centre, now ebbing to those long flat suburbs that stretch around her like a desolate shore. Paris with her pale shuttered windows, her secrets and sins,

as seen in the tender Baudelairean gaze of a Pierre Jallez, or the bargain-searching scrutiny of a Havercamp. The town of little streets and Jews' shops with bargains in tan boots; or the windy heights of Montmartre with its creaking roofs and pale enticing skies. The long drab streets, the " street of the Gospel " behind the factory wall, with its fortune-tellers and midwives, its pale children and worn men. Paris with her unforgettable twilights when a late carriage clatters through the quiet streets, while people dine in large tranquil rooms beneath the sparkle of lit chandeliers : her grey dawns that assail the soul of man with fears and obsessions : her moments of triumph and light.

For Romains is a poet as well as a consummate story-teller, and considers every aspect of Paris, no less than the problems of his age, giving a deeply significant picture of the passing life of a generation. And in so doing, while justifying his theory of " unanimism," he passes beyond it to demonstrate, perhaps unconsciously, an aspect of truth peculiar to this age, showing the individual as part of an universal relativity, which has hitherto been interpreted only by such a poet as Paul Valéry, such a thinker as Henri Poincaré; and which is undoubtedly to be part of the wider conscience of future generations who will find their bearings in space-time.

Certainly nothing in the least resembling *Men of Good Will*, this vast symphony in prose, has as yet been attempted in English literature, and it will assuredly have as wide an influence on the younger generation of writers in this country as it already enjoys in France.

English readers may be grateful to the publishers whose enterprise has given them the English edition, so adequately translated and so attractively produced, almost simultaneously with the original French.

IVAN BOUNIN

In the Forest[1]

A VAST forest, known as the Islands, stretches far and wide round our village. In this forest dwelt Ermil, the game-keeper, a thick-set, wrinkled fellow, and this is what befell him during that Christmas some few years ago.

The forest extends close to the village. On grey days and when the wind is not sweeping up the snowstorms before it, you can see it from the roofs of the barns. The fields are tinged with a sickly pallor, the lowering clouds slope down to meet the horizon which encircles them in a girdle of mist, against which the forest stands forth, all blue and grey. But, like everything else in winter time, it seems to be far distant. Yet if any man made his home in these hollows, full of wolves and hares and nearly hidden by dense overgrowth, in the old hut with the coppice all around it and the leafless oaks half buried in the snow, he would feel entirely cut off from all his fellow creatures, unless he grew used to such solitude. Now Ermil had never grown accustomed to forest life; his work had lain in the neighbouring villages, then for long years at the railway station and a distillery. He was all alone in the world, and had no family.

[1] Translated by John Peile from the Russian of Ivan Bounin.

Like many another who has never found contentment in his God, his masters or associates, Ermil had long yearned to live far from his fellow men. He disliked them and felt uneasy in their company. They ordered him about in harsh tones, thinking him a fool and an idler, while Ermil, in submitting to their severity, consoled himself by thinking ironically that he was not by any means so foolish as they supposed. Being convinced that all men wished him ill, he went on his way never looking anyone in the face, always on the alert. By settling in this forest, which seemed so far from any human abode, he thought that he could spend at any rate one winter there in peace and quiet.

Like most peasants, he was naturally timid, but on one occasion, in a spirit of bravado, he had spent a whole night alone in a barn, and was thus convinced that nothing could really scare him. Relying implicitly on his own self-confidence, he set up his home in mid-autumn. But he soon found that the terrors lurking in the forest surpassed anything that he could have imagined. How depressing was the rustle of leaves at night in these pitch-dark woods while the November rains fell unceasingly! However loud his cries, no living soul would awake to hear them. Only the wind, sweeping over the plains, the deserted roads, the fields so grey and gloomy, while the village slept like the dead. Ermil seemed to be utterly lost in the darkness, like a man drowning in a limitless ocean. Unluckily his sleep, though sound, was broken by constant awakenings.

He had told himself that with a stout stick in his hand he would stride through the forest by night and "woe betide the tramp or thief who came my way!" But in these dark, dreary nights he found that he could not venture even to cross his own threshold.

The forest was full of wolves, which had made their holes

in hollows under the dense thickets. How often at midnight had the dogs asleep in front of his hut run barking and yapping for safety into the porch over his doorway! Then Ermil would snatch up his rusty old gun and, dazed with sleep, his head heavy with the smoke from the rushlight, would hurry to the porch shouting vaguely. From all sides green, gleaming eyes stared at him, then vanished quickly into the hollows and dark thickets. He went back to bed accompanied by the bedraggled dogs, which ran hastily and hid under the bench. Sparks fell from the red and smoky rushlight into the water-filled bowl that stood under the hanging lamp, casting shadows which seemed to quiver and dance. Torrents of rain fell heavily. Ermil took a forked stick, set it against the door, thrusting it into the jambs and fixed it there, driving it firmly in with all his might. Then he lay down again on his back, still in his heavy coat, his cap pulled well over his head, his short thin legs bound round with hemp. He stared straight before him with yellow, piercing eyes that never flickered.

With winter the wind changed its quarter. The heavy storms of sleet and rain had finished their task, stripping off the leaves, which now lay thick in the hollows like a carpet of rusted copper. The forest was as bare as your hand, and a cold pale sky showed through the leafless branches. Snow fell, only to freeze hard where it lay. Now that it was the winter the naked forest was already echoing with dry, hard crunchings.

Ermil felt his spirits rising. But scarcely a week had passed when, making his round one day, cudgel in hand, he came upon a dreadful sight. He was splashing along in the mire of paths half buried in dirty snow, hearing the deep notes of the bull-finches, with their red breasts and drooping feathers, his dogs as usual scampering before him across the woodland, when suddenly he stopped. High up among the

rustling tree-tops, from the branch of a great oak, hung a rope, and from the end of it swayed the head of a dog, its flesh torn away and gnawed by ants to the very bone; two or three bits, broken and half rotting away, still held fast to the head. On the ground at the tree-foot lay some ribs and tufts of brown hairs. He examined these remains carefully, poking them about with his stick, so long that his eyes began to tingle. He tried to reckon the size of the beast, and who his owner might have been—a peasant, or perhaps some gentleman? With what object had it been killed—in sport, or just for the fun of the thing? Was it an act of revenge? Then suddenly he dropped his stick and stood rooted to the ground, terror-struck at the thought that he too might hang like this dog. He was all alone in the world, and on all sides only the forest, with not a soul near him. No one cared if he were alive or dead. If some evil befell him, no one would hear of it for a month, and even when they did know, it would make little difference to them. And in a few weeks it would be Christmas time. The season of holiday-making was a particularly anxious time for anyone who lived outside the village, in the forest or on the plains. How would it feel to be all alone during those days of merry-making? It was the mating season with the wolves, and then in the evenings and nights of Christmas week dangerous things happened. Wicked folk often take advantage of these eerie nights. Ermil felt his legs shaking as if he were standing on the edge of a precipice. He turned round quickly, pulled his cap still further over his head, and, hurrying on, stumbling clumsily over roots, made his way back to the hut.

When he got there, he washed himself, said a prayer and set to work, or rather, as he stripped the bark for firewood, lost himself in thought. They were not very cheerful thoughts, but he did not mind that. He could not get the

memory of the dog's carcass out of his mind. The boughs smoked and crackled; it was warm and damp in the hut. Outside under the window, its back thrust against the glass, the dog stretched lazily beneath a mantle of snow. Ermil thought, "How can I teach him to leap up at a stranger's throat? Or find a trap for the wolves, and set it in front of the hut hidden in straw and snow?"

The days went by. He must do something to defend himself. But what to do? Which of the ways that occurred to him should he adopt? He must hit upon some plan easy to carry out and likely to be reliable. He must show that he could go one better than the villains who would undoubtedly come for him. Ermil's fears vanished, but hatred and cunning banished all peace of mind.

At intervals in his calmer moments he would ask himself, "But who would ever think of coming to kill me?" Then at once his delusion possessed him again. "Who would do such a thing? Can anyone ever tell? There are evil minds in plenty. But why should they? What would be the good of it? Such a senseless act, too! Men usually think first what use something will be to them. But they are also very wicked." Had he not been forced to give up his job, first on the railway, then at the distillery, for the sole reason that his hair grew too thickly, his face was so wrinkled, and his legs too short, also because he never spoke a word, though he understood things clearly enough? Had not his fellow workmen conspired to smash his legs up and smother him with his own overalls while he slept, and then pitch him into a vat of boiling spirit and say that it was just an accident? One day—the Feast of Our Lady of Kazan—as he walked harmlessly through the village street, Makhor, the shoemaker, that thievish, drunken, God-forsaken fellow, started to abuse him. "Just you wait, Courtaud," he yelled at him. "Just you

wait a bit. I'm coming to give you a good hiding." It was quite clear—a man would never cease fighting his neighbour and beating his bones to a pulp when he knows that he won't get into trouble by the game. See how the moujik catches by the scruff of his neck the thief who has robbed him of an armful of hay. The stolen hay is of no value whatever, but of course the moujik makes the most of the incident, since he risks nothing by doing so. Well has the proverb said: "One evil-doer makes another."

At last his plans were laid: it was time to act.

To begin with he tested the firing of his gun, which he had now repaired with a rough stock of his own making. He cleaned the barrel, loaded it with leaden shot, gave the trigger a good clean up, and charged it carefully. Then he went out and stood upright for nearly an hour by a snow heap, in which he sank to his knees with the wind sweeping all round him, waiting for a crow. At length the wind blew one that way, a stupid, exhausted, croaking creature. Plunging into the snow with many a tumble, Ermil ran towards the tree on which the bird had perched. He knelt down, propped the rifle up on a branch, took a steady aim at the dirty grey crow whose back was bent in its efforts to caw, and fired. Deafened, blinded, staggering from the violence of the recoil against his cheek and shoulder, he fell flat on his back. But he quickly got to his feet again and, preceded by his dog, barking furiously, he rushed upon his prey. The bird lay in the soft snow, all bleeding and mangled under the very tree on which only a few minutes before he had been cawing so hoarsely.

When he got home again, Ermil took a stick, carefully broke a small piece of the glass on the lower corner of the window, and tried thrusting the barrel of his gun through the hole, while he himself sat on his bench. The barrel went in

quite easily, but he discovered that the bench was too high. To saw a piece off the legs was perfectly simple. When this task was accomplished, Ermil stopped up the hole with rag. "It'll be a darkish night with all this snow coming on, but not hard to see, I'm sure, thanks to the moon." He would put some straw on the window ledge to hide the muzzle of the gun; then he would go back into his hut, put the light out, and stand close against the window on the watch, with his eyes fixed to the path which climbed from the ravine to the hut. Anyone coming by this path would see nothing through the window with its straw covering, least of all discern Ermil himself. But who was likely to come? That was the only question still left for him to answer. After some thought on the matter he decided who the man would be.

On Christmas Eve he set out for the village. His stick on his shoulder, he strode across the snowbound, mist-sodden fields, following the path now almost hidden that led to the village, lowering his head before the gusts, and pondering over what he had to do, whom to go and see and what to say to them.

Yet in all these resolutions he was not altogether honest with himself. He said, "I am just going to the village to buy a few things and see how folks are getting on, hear what they are saying, and find out what's really at the back of their minds." Habit is second nature, after all!

Across the snowstorms he suddenly saw the miserable shrubs which surrounded the barns, now locked and barred, half buried in the snow. The village looked sad and deserted, but at any rate it was a more cheerful place than the forest, where the very snow seemed whiter and more crumbling, like a desert or land of savages. He came along its one street, past the churchyard, a wind-swept hillock where here and there a cross stood out from the snow. A little further on it was

less stormy—you could breathe more easily. Ermil crossed himself as he passed by the church with its cross-barred windows. He loosened his belt, turned down his coat collar, now stiff with frost, and squared his shoulders under his thick jersey. Figures came and went like black shadows across the snow. They were on their way to the store or wine shop. Without undue haste Ermil went in too, and while waiting his turn stood modestly in a corner, his bag in one hand, his stick in the other, like a beggar.

Wrapped up in their great top coats and cloaks all covered with snow, the villagers stamped about, their legs bound with hemp or in felt boots which the cold had hardened, and wiping their noses on their sleeves. In his fine linen coat the shopman served his customers quietly and competently; his quickness seemed to possess an inherent elegance, his youthful, clear-cut features, his brown eyes, and long thin beard made him look like a saint taken down from an ikon. He filled up the open-mouthed sacks with barley, poured petrol into bottles, his long knife sliced off with practised skill just the right quantity of pink bacon or pig fat required, tossing it on to the rusty weighing machine merely as a formality. The machine smelt of salt herring, greasy wool and leather. Ermil greeted his neighbours sullenly, had a few words with them, and bought some cheese, salt and matches. As he paid for these he casually let them see the three-rouble notes. Then he started to talk, not addressing anyone in particular, putting meanwhile his change back into his pocket and lighting a cigarette, although he was no smoker, but so that he could prolong his stay in the shop, and so have his share of the coarse snuff which the shopman kept ready for his customers in an old sardine box.

" You're lucky to be living in the village. It's a good life here. Mine's pretty rotten, squatted down in the forest with

the wolves about. Here's Christmas coming—you'll all have lots of fun at home. It's simply awful in the depths of the forest. It scares me, I can tell you. And suppose some fool came and killed me. He might do—he might say to himself, 'Ermil's got money; he's hidden it away, the old skinflint.' Or men might come with masks on, just to give me a fright—that will be very dangerous. I am not as strong as I was. I'm getting old."

"You jabber so much, you'll end by bringing some trouble on yourself," said the shopman, handing a packet of snuff to an old man with a pock-marked face. "If you don't keep your mouth shut, folks'll start talking."

The villagers agreed with him. "That's true enough. That's how it always happens. Just a word starts all the rest gossiping. You're acting like a fool, Courtaud!"

Ermil pulled his cap over his face to hide his satisfaction, then looked round stupidly, shrugged his shoulders and slowly left the shop.

Next he went to the inn, drank a glass of vodka, bought a bottle, thrust it deep into his pocket and repeated his tale of woe. From the inn he walked quickly to the far end of the village, where the priest, the saddler and Vagnka Makhor all lived. It was getting dark, the wind had dropped, the piled-up snow looked blue, and the cottages stood out like little black heaps on the hillside. Makhor's was the smallest and dirtiest of them all. On the wall, whose stones were crumbling and the plaster peeling away, was nailed a wooden board, on which Makhor had painted a top boot like some implement from the Stone Age, with blobs of white and yellowish paint all round it. Though it was now dark in the porch, he soon found the latch and thrust the door open. Michka, the swarthy apprentice, was tapping the heel of a boot, pressing it upwards between his knees and hammering in one after

another little wooden nails, muttering inaudibly. Makhor himself was busy repairing an old accordion with gilt finger-board, and evidently enjoying his work. He put his lips to the silver-topped tubes, blew down them and made a tune. Although Makhor was well past twenty-five, his upper lip was still smooth; he had a long, pale face with clearly marked features and the impudent look of a young ram. He was very tall and, as he walked, slouched from side to side and stooped awkwardly when he played knuckle-bones with the village children on holidays. What a ninny he looked, this great lout, when he started to squabble with some little urchin, and with what pride, satisfaction and swagger he strode from the game when he won!

Just at first Ermil was frightened. As he entered the shop both workmen looked up at him, and their eyes grew big with surprise when they saw who it was. In his efforts to secure Makhor's attention and to appear to be quite unconcerned, he began to talk, explaining that he had come to the village to buy a few things, and had thought he would just look in to ask the price of a pair of boots.

"Tops, do you mean?" asked Makhor quietly.

"No, why tops—new boots—the whole thing."

Makhor tossed his head and his pale eyes gleamed.

"Who are these boots for?"

"They're for me," said Ermil. "Can't I afford them after all the work I've done all my life?"

"Here's a toff and no mistake about it," said Makhor, looking him over.

"Yes, your time's about up, or aren't you in a hurry to go?"

Michka's face wore a sly, evil-looking smile.

Ermil frowned and shot a quick glance at the shoemaker. He answered with an unconcern he was far from feeling.

" Perhaps you're due to-day, and it will be my turn to-morrow, but it was boots we're talking about. If you won't make them for me, I shall go to old bandy-legged Kostretz. Six roubles—I can afford it."

" Oh, oh, just wait a minute," said Makhor, whistling softly. He looked hard at Ermil, like a thief undisguised, who shows clearly what is in his mind, and asked him, " Have you really got any money ? "

Trembling under his glance Ermil mumbled hastily—this time with perfect truth,—" What's that you're saying ? What money could I have ? Where could I have got it from ? "

He realised that he had nearly made a mess of the whole business, but recovering in time, made the best of his involuntary truthfulness and with a hang-dog air began to repeat what he had just been saying in the shop.

" Money ! Oh, that's just all fancy and gossip. Why, there am I as still as a mouse in the forest, half dead from fright. I don't close my eyes at night. If anyone came and scared me after dark, it'd be enough to make me ill."

" Make you ill—attack of the jumps, eh ? " asked Makhor.

" I should say so," went on Ermil, feeling in smooth water again. " It's Christmas time—just the time when people put masks on. Perhaps someone might think of playing a trick on me—just put his coat on inside out, with the fur outside, for a bit of fun, and pop up all of a sudden under my window. I'd be as good as a dead man."

" Oh, all you came for was to swagger and be a nuisance," said Makhor, whose tone was now indifferent. " I am a fool to waste my time with you." He took up his accordion, then suddenly roared with delight and signed to Michka.

" What's the matter with you ? " asked his assistant.

" Nothing," answered Makhor cheerily, but in rather a strange tone.

Ermil waited a few minutes longer to prevent their noticing the effect of their behaviour on him; he knew quite well what this laughter meant. Makhor would certainly come and scare him. Then, remarking that it was getting late, and promising to look in before very long and settle about the boots, he left them, while Makhor lit the lamp.

Night had fallen; a heap of ice-bound sweepings gleamed faintly near the porch. High up above Ermil's head shone the moon and a great star which disappeared now and then in the clouds. The cross on the church stood out brightly.

When he got home it was quite late. The dog was waiting for him squatting by the hut, looking up at the moon. They came in together, the two good friends, and without more ado lay down. They slept soundly, but both had very strange dreams. The dog howled and ran about. Ermil woke up in the middle of the night. The moonlight streamed like a white disc right on to the middle of the hut over the levelled ground. On the bench sat an old man bent double with age; his greenish, shivering figure was clad in a long shirt, and on his head he wore a funeral wreath. Recognising his own father, Ermil went up and asked him with a sneer, "Father, how do you come to be here? I don't fear you now."

The dead man, smiling, raised a pale hand, and made the sign of the Cross over Ermil's head. "Sleep, sleep on. God guard you. Fear the wicked."

Suddenly waking, Ermil perceived that he had not risen from the bench, but was still lying on it. But many times afterwards he dreamt that he woke up and rose to make sure that the pole which he had set across the door was firmly fixed. Then he took the bowl from the oven and drank till it was empty; he had forgotten to eat his supper when he returned. Morning came, but he still slept, and did not even

light the fire. At length, toward evening, he got up, drank up the bitter soup, and having said his prayers, proceeded to load his gun. By this time it was dark, but he did not light up. His hands shook and spilt the shot. Seated beside him, the dog looked up at him with eyes that seemed almost human in their strangely inquisitive glance. He did not drive him away. He felt quite calm, despite his trembling hands.

Towards eight o'clock he went out. Clouds again hid a moon paler and more watery than on the evening before. A light breeze swept the snow like dust over the bleak ground.

From eight till ten he did not stir, seated breathless on the bench by the window in the dark stuffy hut.

Suddenly he heard a sound, and got up quietly and put his face close up against the glass. In the pale whiteness of the moonlight along the path which wound through the snow-powdered thicket two dark forms could be seen coming up from the hollow below. The taller led the way, and within a minute had reached the hut; his shadow fell dark against the snow. He bent down to press his face against the glass, when Ermil, drawing back, fired a shot which echoed with a deafening crash.

Michka bounded backwards and rolled over into the ravine.

Makhor fell flat on the ground. Ermil rushed out, followed by the dog, barking furiously. He bent over the huge body which lay face downwards. Makhor had put his coat on inside out and had daubed a huge moustache on his face with charcoal. The snow on his belly was already crimson with blood. His right hand was thrown backwards and the thong of his gilded accordion still hanging from the thumb.

Three months later Ermil came before the judges. He made on one and all the best possible impression. As he came into court he turned towards the corner with the ikon and crossed himself many times, then bowed profoundly to the

judges. When called upon, he rose up, threw back his long hair, and made his replies without promptings or evasions, smiling amiably, putting in such phrases as "My lords," "Just and honourable judges," whenever he spoke. He was evidently delighted that all these people had assembled on his account, that the court was full of ladies and merchants in frock coats, and that so many men in uniform were gathered round the table with the fringed cloth. No one interrupted him, as, without even a glance at the pale, terrified Michka, he told the story of his lonely life in the forest, his visit to the village, his talk about the boots, and finally the murder in every detail. Several times he said "My lords, merciful judges, I have committed a great sin. Evil men were plotting to kill me. I had always the feeling that some misfortune threatened me."

"Yes, but they brought their accordions with them," he was reminded.

"Aye, the devil sings and dances, and as he dances he kills. Send me to prison."

In the convent where he was sent to serve his sentence no one worked so hard as Ermil. How scrupulously he swept the court! How skilfully he cut wood! How admirable the eagerness with which he brought water to the refectory! He found high favour with the monks, and stayed on with them when he had served his time.

"He lived with God." But he always refused to take Holy Orders.

"No, I am too wicked a sinner," said he with much self-satisfaction.

END PAGES

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

GERAINT GOODWIN was born at Newtown, Montgomeryshire, some thirty years ago—not far from the home of the well-known author of *Dew on the Grass*—but went to another part of Wales for his education.

His next book, *Call Back Yesterday*, will shortly be published by Jonathan Cape.

MARIAN BOWER was never educated, she tells the Editor; not, that is, in the modern sense of the word. She learned the use of the globes and the art of deportment from the same governess who had introduced these branches of erudition to her mother.

Starting life with a predilection for variety in the matter of spelling, from that day to this she has been almost as impartial in the distribution of vowels or the doubling of consonants as were our Elizabethan ancestors. Arithmetic, it is true, was supposed to be inculcated by an individual who came once a week, and was spoken of as Herr Professor. But as Herr Professor had fought in the Franco-Prussian War, and the one certainty about her calculations was that, only by accident did two and two come out at four, the small girl found it not without advantage to turn Herr Professor's mind away from, say, fractions to his soldiering days. And, by the time he had charged once again at Gravelotte (he called it St. Privat), it was a matter of as much indifference to him as it was to her, whether it required one or more of those "damned dots" to solve the problem; or whether curious feats of multiplication, with little figures one above the other, with the line between them and crosses distributed here and there as if they were kisses sent from the scullery-maid to the garden boy, would better meet the case.

FRANK O'CONNOR, a young Irish author of two novels, began to prepare a collected edition of his own works at the age of twelve. He learned several languages while interned by the Free State Government, and after his release won a prize for a study of Turgenev in Irish. By profession and inclination a librarian.

LIAM O'FLAHERTY finds a good recreation from writing novels in rearing Kerry goats and playing the melodean;

amongst other works his study of a man who was an informer—under that title—will perhaps be the best known.

VINCENT SHEEAN was born when the nineteenth century had only a few days to go. He became a foreign correspondent at twenty-one for the *Chicago Tribune*, and in his three-and-a-half years' service for that newspaper he was present at a variety of disturbances in Europe, including the Rhineland Separatist troubles, the occupation of the Ruhr, the Spanish *coup d'état* of 1928, the Mateotti affair in Italy; gave a report of Hitler's putsch of 1923 over the telephone when nobody had ever heard of his name, which had to be spelled, "H for Harold, I for Italy" and so on . . . an interesting and adventurous career.

Edouard A. Aujard is at present in Melbourne for the Centenary celebrations. He is a well-known Australian writer of short stories. After many years spent in the Mercantile Marine and the Australian Navy, he turned to journalism, and soon began to specialise in sea-stories. His understanding of the lives of those who sail the mysterious element is, our readers will agree, profound.

The author of the article on "Men of Good Will," E. A. MACKAY, has contributed to many literary journals and is the author of a volume of poems entitled *The Garden of the Gods and Other Poems*, and has edited and contributed to the *Journal of the Poetry Society*.

OUR COMPETITIONS

WE are holding over the announcement of the winner in the competition story for December until next month, when we shall also give the promised prize for a story whose characters and situation were specified in the End Pages. While on this subject of writing, which looks so easy and *is* so difficult, may we recommend that authors in need of some help, either in their writing or to find the best outlets for their work, should investigate the possibilities of the *London School of Journalism?* We hold no brief for this or any other school, but we have seen some of their work, and can recommend them with some confidence, just as we might do when recommending a book—the standard would be good and the goal aimed at would be accomplished.

We have had a number of letters asking for more detailed information about the scope of the Magazine—what type of story or article! As a general rule the closer to Literature the less stereotyped the contribution becomes; editors in general are very definite as to what they want, and generally personality is not considered so important as (say) some love element or, as with the article, topicality; but here we try to reverse this order,

and encourage the artistic, the unusual—anything in fact which is creative—to the exclusion of the stereotyped, banal, or the clever write-up which is at best only second-rate. After all, Literature is a way of life told finely with all the gifts of the author utilised in the telling; but there is no set manner, no special secret to learn: the germ must be in the author, without which any progress to the first grade is impossible.

M. E. F.

LITERARY RAMBLES

When I first glanced at the manuscript of *Khartoum Tragedy*, by Marcus Maclaren, I was a little prejudiced: I thought—another of these imaginative biographies of historical characters, and there have been too many of them. But the first few pages gripped me, I realised at once that the author had a deep knowledge of the mid-Victorian scene, and the power of conveying it to the reader, then that the psychology was subtle and exciting, and finally that the story had great dramatic power.

It happens that this book will appear at the time when the fiftieth anniversary of Gordon's death is being celebrated, an appropriate moment for a sympathetic study, from an entirely new angle, of a strange and powerful personality who had profound reactions on the official and political world of London, and on the savage world of the Desert. Those reactions are history, and Mr. Maclaren takes no liberties with them, but he has allowed his imagination to play with the reactions which history does not record, on the ordinary men and women who crossed Gordon's path.

It would be unfair to give away the plot of the book; I will only commend it as a sincere, moving and beautiful tribute to one of the greatest of Englishmen, which I feel sure will give to many the deep pleasure which it has given to me.

As I am about to mention three books of foreign origin, the recent remark of someone that Lovat Dickson were publishing too many foreign books occurs to me. I replied, weakly and unconvincingly, that a glance at our current list would show a large proportion of English work. After he had left the room I realised that I ought to have preached a little sermon on the text, "Art has no Frontiers," and on the importance, in these days of excessive nationalism, of learning other nations' points of view from their best literature. Anyway, I do not apologise in the least for these three books, as each is a book of real interest.

Guy Mazeline's *The Wolves* comes to us with high credentials. The best French critics acclaim it as a work of the highest importance, and it won the Prix Goncourt: American critics whose judgment can be relied

on agree. Though he does not work on such an immense scale as Romains, Mazeline uses a large canvas, and his picture of the life of a French sea-port is extensive, detailed and convincing. *The Wolves* is a book which connoisseurs of fine novels should not miss.

The Epic Makers, by Paul Morand, has no such claims to rank as an important serious novel; it is frankly light and amusing. M. Morand has a high reputation as a master of satire, and on this occasion he has chosen a particularly tempting subject—the French Cinema Industry, which, if we are to believe him (and we have his word that he is not exaggerating), is a very strange business indeed. French films, it appears, are financed (an elastic word), directed and acted by Greeks, Russians, Syrians, Jews from every country in Europe, even an occasional Englishman, by every race and nationality, except Frenchmen. And it seems that under these conditions, the most amazing and diverting things happen. Certainly if anything could raise the dead, the turning of the one great epic of the French into that box-office success "Fayre France" should have brought Roland and his Paladins from their graves at Roncevaux.

The Romanoff, by Leonid Sobeleff, is a novel which has had immense success in Russia. Sobeleff writes of the Revolution from the inside: he was an officer of the Navy before the War who took the revolutionary side, a fact that may not commend itself to those to whom Soviet Russia is an obsession, but which gives the stamp of authenticity to this brilliant account of how the animosity hidden beneath a veneer of discipline between officers and lower deck burst into the flame of revolution.

This book has the double interest of being a sea-story and a brilliant analysis of the psychology of revolution.

Many of our readers will remember a very remarkable story in our December number, "Seventy Thousand Assyrians." We are happy to say that this story has had a sequel in the best tradition of fairy tales. That story in particular and one or two others caught the attention of American critics, and from a state of poverty and discouragement, William Saroyan suddenly found himself courted by Literary Agents and Publishers.

Messrs. Faber and Faber have secured his first book, *The Daring Young Man on the Flying Trapeze*, which has had an instantaneous and overwhelming success in America, and may well have an equal success in this country.

Readers of this Magazine will, we feel sure, join us in congratulating Miss Eiluned Lewis, whose idyll of childhood days, *Dew on the Grass*, has won the Book Guild Gold Medal for the best book of the year.

Few books have been accepted so quickly and so unanimously as a classic of their own kind, and the award fittingly endorses the general opinion of the literary world. Her childhood days were spent somewhere near the Severn stream. A charming little prose-poem has been written by Hilda Vaughan, and those who enjoyed *Dew on the Grass* will also like this other one; it is called *A Thing of Nought* and is most beautifully told.

Fifth impression *Dew on the Grass*, 7*s*. 6*d*. Special edition, beautifully bound in Welsh lamb-skin, 12*s*. 6*d*.

S. G. T.